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THE BALKAN POWER-PATTERN

NOTHING has happened in the past week to impede the expected Nazi enterprise in the Balkans. The airports are ready for their planes, and when the ice-blocks in the Danube have ceased to be an obstacle, a bridge of boats will swing from the left bank to the right and a German army will walk across it into Bulgaria. Meanwhile, the political pattern of this Peninsula arranges itself to further the German design. The Greeks, with amazing pluck, fight on alone against the Italians. They accept from us the help of the Navy and the R.A.F., but save in Crete they have not summoned our land forces to their aid. They do not wish to precipitate a German attack. The oddest part of their situation is that while they wage victorious war on Germany's ally, they are not at war with Germany herself. On that point German propaganda constantly reassures them—coupling the reassurance with warnings of the wisdom of making terms with Italy. Behind these diplomatic moves is the probability that before long the mechanised Attila will thunder down the Struma Valley to the Greek frontier.

The Germans have chosen a roundabout route which would have been dangerous if they had feared attack. Above them are the Russians in Bessarabia, and below them the Turks hold Thrace and the Straits. On their right are the Yugoslavs, well placed to hinder or to help. We have grown so accustomed to the Nazi technique of intimidation and corruption, that we hardly realise the ruthless skill of this enterprise. Six months ago, what friends did Germany possess in this Peninsula? She had in Rumania a little minority party of students and gangsters, known as the Iron Guard: she used it, drove it into revolt and allowed it to be crushed. In Bulgaria one Minister and some of the higher officers of the army were on her side. And that was all. The peasant mass of the Bulgarian population was, and probably still is, strongly Russophile. The Yugoslavs, the bitter foes of Italy, inclined to Panslavism when they were not decidedly the partisans of the democratic West. The Turks were, and still are, subject to one condition, our allies.

Through this unsympathetic Peninsula the Germans are preparing to march, fearing no attack on either flank, and the thing will be achieved, until they reach the Greek frontier, without their firing a shot. Hungary, Rumania and to-morrow Bulgaria open their frontiers, while Yugoslavia, Turkey and Russia watch the *Drang nach Osten* in passivity. And that is the least significant part of this riddle. Every man of average intelligence in Eastern Europe understands perfectly well that the march to the Greek frontier decides the future of the Balkan Peninsula. The frontiers of the New European Order are visibly pushed forward under our eyes. And only the Greeks stand in a posture of resistance.

How are we to account for the rapidity of Hitler's advance? Hungary, indeed, was bribed, for she got half Transylvania and may subsequently get a little more. But that explanation does not carry us far, for Rumania was carved up, yet she, too, clings with amputated arms to the Axis. Bulgaria got the Southern Dobrudja, but it was hers at almost any moment for the asking, and her King has set his face against any repetition of the expansionist adventures that ruined his father. Rumour reports an elaborate series of territorial re-arrangements offered, we are told, to the Yugoslavs. That story lacks confirmation, and is for a variety of reasons improbable, as it is reported. But some arrangement has been offered, and Belgrade is not likely to be the gainer by accepting it.

Bribery, we believe, has played only a small part in this business. Germany now dominates the Balkans partly by the military power she wields from her central position, for she is supreme within the radius of action of her bombing planes, but as much by the magnet of her voracious market. She owes her success as much to her economic pull as to her soldierly prowess. Her only possible rival in this peninsula was Russia, but the U.S.S.R. had no economic pull and dared not use her military strength.

That is the moral which emerges for us from the disappointing treaty of friendship just concluded between Turkey and Bulgaria. Against the dead weight of old feuds and modern greeds the Turks have worked manfully to forge unity among the Balkan States, and they have done it with British backing. A year or two ago such a treaty might have ranked as a hopeful beginning. To-day it registers

failure. These two States are, indeed, pledged to refrain from attacks upon their neighbours, but that in the circumstances is likely to mean only that each will stand passive while Germany marches on. One rather pathetic clause may reveal British inspiration: they undertake to do all that is possible to develop mutual trade. What ironical imp invented that detail? The volume of trade across this landscape will not be impressive for some time to come: but apart from this, Turkey and Bulgaria are not, and never can be, in the economic sense complementary: they grow the same crops. And that is broadly true of all these Balkan States. They do not need each other: it is to industrial Europe they must sell, and from it they must buy. As little does Russia need their grain, nor can she supply their industrial needs. What she might do, they will not, for reasons of class politics, accept. It is fairly clear that Moscow did make early this year to Sofia at least a tentative offer of a pact of mutual assistance. This the Bulgarian Government decidedly rejected. Russia then recoiled after this momentary show of resistance to the Nazis, and ostentatiously denied that she was proposing to help even her good friends the Turks with arms. Now they, in turn, relapse into passivity. They will defend their frontiers and the Straits, but even they acknowledge no obligation of solidarity towards their Balkan neighbours. It is useless to blame them for their failure to constitute a coherent league of mutual support. The only possible unit for such a league is Europe itself, which forms an intelligible economic pattern. That neither London nor Geneva would ever understand. The Nazis grasped it.

The Alert in the Pacific

Japan's movements convey the very clear threat that this semi-detached partner of the Axis is contemplating an active part in Germany's spring offensive against the British Empire, either by bluff or in grim earnest. If it could be managed by bluff, the resources of the Dutch East Indies would be turned over to feed her war industries: if bluff fails, will she risk an attack on Singapore? In either case, the first moves in the game will be identical. They are not far to seek. Additional Japanese troops have been concentrated in the islands of Formosa and Hainan and in French Indo-China, while Thailand (Siam) looks more than ever like a Japanese base, off which Japanese warships are now cruising. The announcement from Tokio that the convoy system is coming into force for the Japanese merchant marine seems to point in the same direction. The reply from our side was as prompt as it was public. The Australian Cabinet met suddenly to consider the emergency, and the Acting Premier broadcast a warning calling for redoubled energy in defence. It was next announced that a minefield is being laid around Singapore and Australian troops have now been landed for its defence. Two can play at the war of nerves, and the pained remonstrances from some of Japan's diplomatic spokesmen suggest that we have played our part in it to some purpose. The last word in deciding whether the Japanese will stop short at bluff may lie with America. Mr. Roosevelt gave a sharp warning when, in receiving the new Ambassador, Admiral Nomura, he remarked that Japanese-American relations give ground for grave concern. Washington has said, pretty plainly, that it could conduct a war in the Pacific without diminishing its aid to Great Britain. There are various interpretations of Japan's offer of mediation; it may be merely a preliminary to warlike action.

The Rhodesian Report

In March, 1940, African labourers in the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia struck for higher wages. The strike culminated in a riot when the mine management insisted on holding a pay-parade in the presence of an excited crowd. The military opened fire, 17 Africans were killed and 67 wounded. By July, 1940, a Commission of Inquiry had completed its investigations and presented its report. At last, in February, 1941, and only after Parliamentary pressure, this report has been published. The report is, in a sense, disappointing. The Commissioners had a grand opportunity for surveying the whole problem, political and economic, posed by the existence of this prosperous copper belt in the midst of a pretty desolate countryside. Instead, their short report is narrowly confined to the strike situation. But the Commissioners were alive to some of the broader questions. They have put forward a number of valuable suggestions for improved working conditions; many have already been accepted by the Government of Northern Rhodesia. This is all to the good, and when the matter is debated in Parliament a few weeks hence, the adequacy of these concessions will certainly be reviewed. But the real battle is joined only when the Commissioners suggest that the African workers should be encouraged to advance to positions not now open to them. At this point the bogy of the "colour bar" raises its head. There is no legal colour bar in Northern Rhodesia, but in practice white miners get the best jobs and absurdly disproportionate pay. This is the basic cause for African dissatisfaction, and the Rhodesian Government is already perpetrating lame excuses for its continuation. White employees, it says, were promised complete reinstatement in their jobs when they return from active service, so Africans must not hope for advancement. This is altogether too threadbare an argument for keeping Africans down to only the most despised and worst-paid jobs.

Economic Notes (*by an Industrial Correspondent*)

Strong pressure is being brought upon the Chancellor to modify the Excess Profits Tax. Memoranda from such bodies as the F.B.I. and the Advertising Association are being pressed upon him, and the City editors are taking it almost for granted that the Chancellor will give way. There are several aspects of the case for a modification. It is argued that the incentive to economy is greatly weakened with a 100 per cent. E.P.T. There is truth in this, but it is a dangerous argument. It means that in spite of all the appeals to the ordinary man to give his best to the nation, in spite of the fact, for example, that the rank and file are called upon to protect business property gratis and in precedence to the defence of their own homes, the business man cannot be relied upon to serve his country to the utmost unless an additional monetary incentive is provided. Secondly, it is argued that businesses should be enabled to set aside ample reserves for the post-war period. This is a totally unjustifiable claim. It means that some individuals *qua* shareholders will be enabled to tuck away earnings at a time when all the annual savings of the country are being dissipated in smoke. I see no reason why they should be favoured in this way while other people, so far from even preserving their existing capital in their businesses, are losing everything. And this leads to the third argument for a revision of the E.P.T., namely, the inequities and the anomalies of the tax in its present form. I agree that avoidable inequities and anomalies are indefensible, but there are scores of examples which take precedence of the E.P.T. That conservative organ, *The Banker*, has an excellent article in its February number on War Losses and Compensation. It points out what has so often been urged in these columns that the problem of securing equality of sacrifice "as a problem calling for unified and coherent action on recognisable principles has simply not been tackled at all." With the forthcoming conscription of labour and the drastic stiffening of limitation of supplies orders, which latter will close down many small businesses, there will be, under the existing lack of co-ordinated policy, inquities and anomalies which will demand much more urgent consideration and treatment than does the E.P.T. grievance.

* * *

The Ministry of Labour's analysis of last year's wage-changes, trade disputes, and price movements is interesting in more than one respect. The number of days lost through disputes was smaller than in any year on the record; and such disputes as did lead to stoppages of work were all short and mostly limited to a single firm. The actual number of stoppages was well above the average of recent years, and the aggregate number of workers involved was well up to the average. This is precisely what one would expect under present conditions. Major questions of wages and hours all get settled by negotiation or arbitration; but the constant changes in workshop methods which arise out of war conditions are bound to generate local friction, and to lead to small, sudden strikes which are for the most part settled almost as soon as they begin. Strike action of this sort is a necessary safety-valve: it is often the workman's only means of protest against managements which refuse to recognise collective bargaining or try to take unfair advantage of war necessities. The loss of under a million working days—a mere fraction of a day per worker—is a cheap price to pay for the preservation of industrial liberty. Indeed, it is very possible that the net result on output is not loss but gain; for the reported results of these stoppages show

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that they have often led to the removal of grievances which might have kept output down.

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The total wage-changes reported in 1940 raised weekly wage-rates by an aggregate of £2,148,000 for full-time work—or at the rate of nearly £112 millions a year. This figure takes, of course, no account of additional employment (or of short time in the trades which are being cut down); nor does it reflect changes due to shifts of occupation or overtime work in the war trades. The total rise in earnings must be considerably greater; but there is no adequate way of estimating it. The Ministry of Labour recently published figures showing the changes in average weekly earnings in certain trades between October, 1938, and July, 1940. These showed, for the metal, engineering and shipbuilding trades, a rise of 36 per cent. in men's and 34 per cent. in women's earnings between these dates. On the other hand, in the clothing trades men's earnings had risen by only 12 and women's by only 10 per cent. For other important groups the figures were as follows, for men and women respectively: textiles, 33 and 25 per cent.; food and drink trades, 16 and 7½ per cent.; printing and paper, 0.6 and 4.4 per cent.; chemicals, 26 and 14 per cent.; transport, 21 and 36 per cent.; public utility services, 12 and 25 per cent. In most cases, except the last, the earnings of boys had risen considerably more than those of adult men; but girls' wages had risen less, except in trades in which they had been extensively substituted for boys. These calculations are enough to show that there are now large discrepancies in earnings between trade and trade, and also to discredit the stories about the huge earnings of munition workers. These huge earnings do exist, but they apply to a very few persons. Of the war trades, shipbuilding shows the biggest advance—47 per cent. for men. Men's earnings in general engineering show a rise of only 33 per cent., whereas women's show 48 per cent. There have, of course, been further increases since July; but it is also to be remembered that since that date employers have been much more effectively prevented from attracting skilled men by offers of high earnings.

Compensation and Pooling

Among topics raised in the House last week none opened more important questions than Mr. Rhys Davies's remarks about the grave position of the cotton industry in consequence of the restriction of exports and home consumption. The more immediate problem is obviously the problem of how to mobilise our economic war-potential without inflicting intolerable and unjust hardship in a haphazard manner on individuals merely because they happen not to have been in war-trades already before the war. We all want a restriction of unessential consumption to the lowest level compatible with the maintenance of health and morale. We all know that all labour and such plant as can be used for the purpose must be made available to the expanding munition industry. But time and again we have pointed out that the methods which the Board of Trade employs are inefficient, unfair and inflict unnecessary hardship. Most of the cut in consumption has exhausted itself in the under-employment of labour and plant and not in freeing plant and labour. The requisitioning of factory buildings would not do much to improve matters. The sale of "quotas" is also insufficient, especially as *financial* and not technical considerations determine which firm sells to which, and which closes down. All firms resist economic annihilation, and rightly so under present circumstances. Hence they will retain more productive factors than would be necessary to carry on and charge the resulting loss of productivity to the consumer. At the same time, they employ all possible pressure to get the restrictions rescinded. The controls are in the hands of the industries themselves. Are they going to be very energetic? And will the Government incur the unpopularity? What will happen is that the war effort will suffer.

Nor is the position of the workpeople happier: as a result of the lack of any coherent and logical wage policy, they are now more often than not forced to suffer a wage-cut. And because the geographical planning of war-industry paid little attention to the conditions of labour supply, housing, transport, etc., they are also forced to submit to very unfavourable working conditions whilst their expenses rise in consequence of the enforced separation from their families. Hence compulsion on an increasing scale is inevitable, whatever Mr. Bevin says. But the form it takes is all-important.

Finally, the distribution of available scarce supplies remains fitful, haphazard and in most cases unfair to the poorer sections of the population.

The solution will come—after many debates, evasions, and the usual accusations against critics—by central planning of the distribution of available supplies by rationing, by a rational readjustment of relative wages, the granting of full wages to trainees and, finally, by financial pooling of industry and trade. There must be financial pooling in order to free the individual entrepreneur from the nightmare of complete economic annihilation and in order to free his plant for war purposes. There might have to be State subsidies to the pooled industry if the profits of the surviving firms are insufficient to pay adequate compensation without raising prices. Just as in the case of exchange control and many other war measures, a rational solution is being obstructed, and only practical experience—hence loss of time, substance and morale—will teach the civil servants the lessons they could obtain either by *a priori* reasoning or by reading the history of the Nazi blunders.

The Household Means Test (*from a Parliamentary Correspondent*)

After Pethick-Lawrence's splenetic attack upon the Labour rebels who had tabled a reasoned amendment, the debate on the Determination of Needs Bill resolved itself into an internal dispute of the Labour Party carried on in public with complete lack of reticence. From that point onwards the Labour front bench could not hide their depression as one after the other the rebels immediately behind them attacked the Labour hierarchy. Ness Edwards, who has obviously been hiding his light under a bushel, tore the Bill to shreds with the cold logic of his analysis of the anomalies that must arise from its operation. They wilted still more under the burning sincerity of Ellis Smith. Jim Griffiths looked ashen and haggard as Aneurin Bevan rounded off the attack in a devastating speech upon the shortcomings of his leaders.

Aneurin Bevan put pertinent questions to the Minister of Labour, which the latter refused to answer. "Why," he asked, "has the Minister of Labour not got the abolition of the household means test? Did he try to get it? If he did not, why not? And if he did try, who stopped him? Does he believe in the household means test? No, because if he does he should resign from the Labour Party. Then I ask simply, why have we not got the abolition of the household means test?"

The Labour leaders themselves made the asking of these questions imperative. I understand that Attlee at the Party meeting justified the Bill on the grounds that it was the best they could get. Pethick-Lawrence in the debate said the Bill was not 100 per cent. and had some reservations which caused him disquiet. Ernest Bevin, in winding up the debate, flatly asserted that the Bill did, in fact, abolish the household means test.

Graham White, for the Liberals, said it did not, and Conservative Capt. Cobb went so far as to express his regret "that they have not been able to see their way to removing the household means test."

As Aneurin Bevan made clear, the Labour Party is caught in the toils of its own declarations. The official policy of the Party has always been to abolish the household means test. Upon that it took its stand both in the country and in the House. The rebels, therefore, stand in a far different position from Stafford Cripps when he staged his revolt. The rebels of to-day revolt to secure that the Party carries out the official policy, which the hierarchy have abandoned. Stafford Cripps, in his popular front revolt, rebelled against the official policy of the Party. It is significant that Shinwell voted for the amendment after intending not to do so. According to reports, he had fought the issue both on the Executive and at the Party meeting, without success. Having been defeated, he accepted the majority verdict, but when he heard of Pethick-Lawrence's vitriolic attack upon the back-benchers and of the decision to put the rebels on the carpet, he voted with the minority.

What caused the Labour leaders to forget their pledges to their supporters? Are they hypnotised by their new-found friends in the Government? Do they want the Labour Party to survive? It is becoming doubtful whether it can now survive at all. What did Pethick-Lawrence mean by saying, "During the years we have been fighting with the ordinary political apparatus we have had little or no success in effecting any progress?" Does this portend a new political alignment which dishes working-class aspirations?

Bevin's unhappy performance in winding up the debate mildly amazed the House. Why did he attempt to reply to the debate if, as he confessed, he did not know enough about the operation of the Bill to answer Ness Edwards' lucid exposition of concrete anomalies? Was the jesting note on which he concluded his speech an adequate reply, for instance, to the honesty of purpose of Joe Batey, the veteran miner, who at the age of 75, and suffering from an infirmity, travelled overnight from Durham to vote for the amendment? Surely those final sentences of Bevin's should be rescued from the obscurity of Hansard. "And when I heard Hon. Members indulging in a little rhetoric in order to play with an amateur in this House, I then harked back to the Bill and remembered that it was a good one. I thought that after all these Hon. Members who are attacking this Bill have had such a good time all these years with this great bone of contention and in fighting away at it continuously, they are now almost disappointed that the bone has gone. They remind me of the two Irishmen who had been on strike for six months. One of them bought a paper, and the other, looking over his shoulder, said: 'Pat, is there any danger of a settlement?' When I heard the way in which attempts were made, with difficulty, to find criticisms, I thought the situation was very similar."

At the subsequent Labour Party meeting, which lasted for two hours and a half, the rebels refused to wear the white sheet and vigorously continued the attack. They defeated the machine; it was decided to do nothing to put them in their place. There the matter rests for the moment, but beneath the thin crust the rift remains.

"JOLLIED ALONG"

THE monotony of British broadcasting was sharply broken last week by Commander Southby's rebuke to best-selling novelists and others who want to distract our attention from the urgent task of beating Hitler by discussing war aims, social problems and other similar irrelevancies. His argument was simple. He said, quite truly, that there is an almost unanimous determination to stand up to Hitler; we can rely on ourselves (our rulers, presumably?) to display the same fine qualities in making the peace after the war. That is all we know or need to know. The public needs no argument and discussion; it needs "to be cheered up and jollied along."

We cannot hope to explain to the gallant Commander how profound are his misconceptions, how little he knows about the thoughts or the conversations of common soldiers, factory workers, or of women waiting in queues for a rabbit or a bit of cheese that may or may not be available. He moves in different circles. But we can, perhaps, open certain avenues of reflection which will enable him to understand why some people found his broadcast infinitely depressing. He would not wish to damage morale: that he did so, is, we believe, beyond question.

First, Commander Southby should know that the demand for war-aims does not come primarily from novelists and intellectuals; but from hard-pressed individuals in the Ministry of Information and in the Service Departments who have watched with emotion, at times nearly reaching despair, Hitler's brilliant use of the propagandist weapon and our failure to forge for ourselves a psychological sword as sharp as his own. Commander Southby apparently belongs to the old school of Service men who think that wars are still won just by having more soldiers than the enemy. We would remind him that Hitler defeated the French Army of five million men, supposed to be the best in the world, with a force that certainly did not amount to more than two hundred and fifty thousand. France was defeated before the attack began. She was defeated by Hitler's publication of war aims. For months the French listened to Göbbels explaining that Hitler had no ill-will towards France, that the British were letting them down, and that their rulers were corrupt (which was true) and would betray them (which also proved to be true). Instead, Germany offered them peace, social stability and a New Order, in which they would not be dragged into wars at the behest of their own or British warmongers. Hitler has used war aims as his main weapon of attack ever since he achieved power. He has used them so successfully that he has so far conquered, occupied or otherwise pulverised a dozen countries with very little fighting. When Britain decided to stand up to Hitler we had every opportunity of turning this weapon against Germany; since his occupation and conquest of independent nations our opportunity has been better than ever before. It was the job of our propagandist weapon not only to offer ourselves as liberators to people who are highly sceptical of our record, our purpose and our capacities, but also to convince those who suffer under the Nazis that we could offer a New Order in which social security and peace were compatible with liberty. Not an easy job, but one that was by no means impossible, if we had understood from the beginning that Hitlerism is a social revolution that cannot be countered by negatives.

Hitler had three main propagandist objects at the beginning of this war. The first was to persuade the world that he represented Germany and that there was no distinction between Nazis and the German people. Sir Robert Vansittart and others have given him that terrific weapon. Secondly, he wished to be able to tell the German people that our objects were to crush them and to divide Germany up and enforce a repetition of the economic miseries which she suffered between 1914 and 1933. French propaganda at once obliged Hitler by threatening the partition of Germany, and Britain makes no reply when the Führer tells his people that a German defeat would mean starvation and enslavement. If we offer economic stability and prosperity, a good many people on the Continent—and in this country—would like to know about it. It would be good propaganda—if the offer was real. Thirdly, Hitler wished to establish the conception of himself as leader of the New Order of Europe, which meant a permanent peace for its luckless inhabitants. Britain was to appear as the warlike nation bringing fire and slaughter to a continent which would otherwise be peacefully united under the beneficent government of the German Führer. To counter that conception Britain has so far offered nothing but the appeal to national independence under precisely the same types of rulers who muddled their people into war and failed to give them either peace or prosperity before it. This is a first case for the discussion of war aims. It is because of the necessity for countering Hitler's highly successful propaganda by uniting the conception of cultural freedom with the promise of peace and social security that experts both inside and outside the Government have been pressing since the beginning of the war for a statement of aims; it is because they are lacking that the Ministry of Information cannot, however often it changes its personnel, act as more than a vast wastepaper basket for good ideas.

There is another reason why Commander Southby's broadcast was depressing to those who wish to defeat the Nazis. This is not yet a Fascist country; it is full of people who think even though they express themselves little. Millions of people in this island remember that the Party to which Commander Southby belongs was by no means hostile to Hitler only a few years ago; it regarded him as a bulwark against Bolshevism, and it destroyed quite deliberately the organisation set up after the last war to prevent this one. They know that though Hitler precipitated the war, it was largely the fault of Britain and France that Hitler ever came to power and that, when Mussolini could have been ejected, it was Conservative policy to bolster him up. The Commander's picture of history as a chunk of peace followed by a chunk of war, after which another chunk of peace will come, is no longer common. You cannot "jolly" people into forgetting that war has causes and that the causes will not be removed merely by bombing Germany more severely than Germany bombs us. The social processes that led to war existed in peace and the kind of peace that will follow this war is being determined by the thoughts in men's minds as they listen to the wireless to-day. You cannot "jolly" people into forgetting that there is a food shortage or that the promises of great social changes in this war are not being fulfilled, nor are people so ignorant as to believe that their rulers are not in fact thinking a great deal about the period after the war. Will Commander Southby assure them that boards of directors discussing E.P.T. do not think of what is coming after the war? When the directors of great monopolies take over Departments of State in the war emergency, do the companies they represent never give a thought to their power and position and profits after the war? Do politics really stay put for the duration? It is a good and simple plan this. The soldier who may die on the field of battle, the woman who spends her day collecting food for her children, people who have lost their homes and who are billeted amongst strangers, the mass of the population which listens hopefully to the wireless—none of these are to think about war aims or social problems or the world that is to come after the war. They are just to trust that there will be pie in the sky when they die; that next time there will be homes for heroes. They trusted Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. MacDonald, and Mr. Chamberlain; they know to-day where their trust has landed them. They understand clearly enough why Commander Southby wants them to get on with the business of the war and not ask questions about what is to come.

THE FUTURE OF ABYSSINIA

IT is probable that most of the many people in this country who are interested in Abyssinia have a simple and clear-cut picture in their minds. It is that of a small African Christian nation brutally struck down by Italian aggression. Now the great wrong is being righted and the tragic story is to have an unexpectedly happy ending. But those Englishmen who know Abyssinia well from the inside—and they can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand—realise that to-day's events are not so much an end as the beginning of a new and complicated situation.

It is inevitable that the general public and even those who represent what is called "informed opinion" should be largely ignorant of this obscure country, but it means that the British Government is left to handle a difficult situation with little or no guidance. This article is an attempt to present the Abyssinian picture clear of the sentiment which so frequently hides it and to point out some of the problems which will almost certainly result from our victory in East Africa. It is not an attempt to depreciate Haile Selassie and his people, and, in order to avoid misunderstandings, it may be well to state at the beginning three of the writer's beliefs. Firstly, with certain qualifications to be discussed, the independence of Abyssinia should be restored. Secondly, Haile Selassie should be replaced upon the throne. Thirdly, the help which Abyssinia requires should be given through international collaboration.

So much admitted let us frankly face the difficulties which this policy is likely to meet. They arise from the nature of the country and its peoples. Abyssinia, which cannot yet be regarded as a nation, falls into two parts. One, about a third of the whole, lies

in the highlands roughly north of a line along the Blue Nile and south-eastwards to Ankober. This contains the separate and often warring Amhara groups, of which the most important are Shoa, Tigre, and Gojjam, which were forced in the 'nineties to accept the overlordship of the Shoan Menelik. The other and southern part of Abyssinia is very different in character. It covers about two-thirds of the country and is inhabited by non-Amhara peoples, both pagan and Moslem, who form more than half the total population. It was conquered by Menelik, who joined the other Powers in the scramble for Africa, and, like them, carved out an empire. To maintain his Amhara forces and keep down the conquered tribes, Menelik quartered an army in each province and shared out his new subjects between them. By this system, which was in full force up to the Italian conquest, each soldier was allotted, according to the density of the population, from one to three peasants. Non-commissioned officers got from six to ten; officers more, according to their rank, while governors took from two to three hundred. These men had to do forced labour at the will of their masters; they had to provide them with food; produce fodder for their mules and a silver dollar on feast days. Their women had also to serve by looking after the soldiers' huts. It is hardly necessary to enlarge upon the effects of such a system in the hands of an uncivilised soldiery, upon a once-free peasantry. It ensured their misery and degradation. Where the people were sufficiently docile to make not only good serfs but good slaves as, for example, in Kaffa, Maji and Gimirra, populous and highly cultivated regions went back to empty bush.

This form of military rule and forced labour covered the whole of the subject provinces, with the exception of Chercher, in which an enlightened governor, Dr. Martin (afterwards Abyssinian Minister in London) introduced some reforms. Slavery, to which the historic tradition of Britain was more sensitive, was by contrast a limited problem. The regions for kidnapping were mainly in the South and South-West and in the lowlands along the Sudan border. While British experience has shown that the eradication of slavery is a long task, it cannot be said that the Abyssinian Government, in spite of promises at Geneva and to the Aborigines Protection Society, showed much vigour in opening this campaign against their evil. A little, admittedly, was achieved. The slave-traders were forced to show more discretion in their business, and the slave-owners began to adopt a slightly more defensive attitude, and in the capital, at least, the idea that slavery was uneconomic began to gain ground.

Readers whose assumptions about Abyssinia and its Emperor are challenged by these statements should look back to their own England in the days of the Norman Kings, or even of Harold, so that they may realise better the limitations upon the Emperor's Government. He obtained the imperial throne only in 1930. Even the Amhara groups were grudging subjects. In the year of his accession, and again in 1932, he had to face serious Amhara rebellions, for in this part of Abyssinia it is not sufficient to be king: it is necessary to be king of kings. Tigre remained semi-independent under its own dynasty. Gojjam was lukewarm in the Italian war and, like the Earldoms of Edwin and Morcar in Saxon England, made its own rebellion after the national defeat. The Emperor had to put loyalty before merit and to rely mainly upon his Shoan supporters, who were generally hated by the other Amhara groups. Feudal traditions left the military governors free to tax and exploit their own provinces, and this, with the bad communications, made them independent of Addis Ababa. They filled their pockets from local tolls which strangled trade. Even among the Amhara, national patriotism, out of which a spirit of public service can be developed, was to say the least of it, immature. Among the subject peoples it was non-existent. The Emperor, in an isolation of ideas many years ahead of his people, was unable, or unwilling, to delegate and was overwhelmed by his attempt to graft a modern central administration upon a feudal country.

Such, in brief, was Abyssinia before the eve of the Italian conquest. Since then it has known defeat and the flight of its Emperor and his entourage. It is doubtful whether any European can assess the significance of these events in the minds of the people. There has followed the conqueror's attempt to impose centralised European government with the help of a system of roads. It is not easy, with little evidence but propaganda from one side or the other, to estimate the character of Italian rule in its brief day. At least in the subject provinces, the suppression by the Italians of the ruling garrisons must have been welcomed. Now comes war again, the break-up of the Italian rule, and the inevitable disorders which accompany it.

It is clear that a formidable task faces the Emperor, even though on the crest of a wave of British arms and money he may be carried easily back into power. There are the age-long feuds between the Amhara groups. To these new ones may be added. Have the men of Gojjam, for example, kept up their rebellion against Italian rule in order to restore the vanished Shoan Emperor? Will there not be acts of vengeance by the dispossessed against those who accepted office and favours from the Italians? Factions will be well-armed, either with Italian weapons, stolen or issued, or with new British supplies. And what of the vast subject area? Is the destructive rule of the Amhara garrisons to be re-established with the help of British machine-guns? Or should the sons of the chief overthrown by Menelik be restored? Only European officers could direct such a difficult operation of "indirect rule."

The answer, officially confirmed, is the introduction of European advisers after the withdrawal of the British military control. It is a good answer, especially if the advisers could be drawn from countries such as America, Sweden, or Holland, which could have no acquisitive designs upon Abyssinia. But the implications of the policy should be weighed from the first. The Amhara are an arrogant people and deeply suspicious of Europeans. There will be no comprehension, outside the Emperor's immediate circle, of the standards of good government to which the advisers will work. There will undoubtedly be resistance, perhaps rebellion. The Emperor and his advisers will need powerful and prolonged support. Loan-funds for the continuation of the road-system and the beginning of social services, above all, of education, will be one good argument in their hands. But they will also need that of force represented by a strong body of police commanded by Europeans, with some powerful weapons, including aeroplanes, in reserve. There is no use evading the fact that in present world conditions and in the geographical situation of Abyssinia, the main responsibility for setting up this system will rest upon the British. Are we prepared, in the face of the possibilities described, to see it through? And can we supply the Emperor with weapons to be used, perhaps against the subject peoples, without reserving some responsibility for his actions?

It will not be easy to combine the firm unilateral policy necessary in the introductory stages with the sympathetic and liberal attitude that will be required to gain the confidence of the Abyssinians, and, at the proper time, to make an honest transfer of our powers into the hands of international advisers. Our task is a difficult one. It makes a large demand at once upon our resolution and our altruism. But if we could succeed, if Abyssinia could be guided towards civilisation without paying away her independence as the price, we should have given to this world of greedy imperialisms and racial feuds something of incalcuable value.

A LONDON DIARY

THE Ministry of Food's suggestion that we should make our potatoes an exciting pink by mashing them up with shredded orange peel—*blah de jour*, as you might say—will not in itself solve the most serious food problem that has ever confronted this country. Though we are not nearly as short as we were in the worse period of 1917, the situation is now more dangerous. Then the convoy system had still to be adopted; in those days we had other powerful navies working with ours; we used the Irish bases and the Germans did not use the Atlantic bases of France. More important still, the *Luftwaffe* could not inform submarines of the position of British convoys. The public, which now understands about invasion, must be fully informed of the perils of blockade. Mr. Shinwell was perfectly right to urge in the House of Commons that we must know the truth about our losses at sea. I have always myself held that the German blockade in this war was more likely to be effective that the British, and it has seemed extraordinary to me that a scheme of universal rationing should be so long delayed. The appearance of diseases like scurvy, which show a deficiency of Vitamin C, is at present due to maldistribution or local bad management and not to any actual shortage, but these symptoms—and, worse, the anger due to inequality, shortage and queues—will grow unless the most drastic means are taken to put rich and poor on the same basis. At present anyone with money can get all the food they want in restaurants without using any food coupons at all. This is far the most serious side of the war: dock clearance, transport, shipbuilding, rationing, are all involved and are all run on lines that are inadequate to the emergency.

* * *

Mr. Attlee's tour in South Wales last week-end was a very considerable success. He travelled as Lord Privy Seal, but he spoke as leader of the Labour Party. His tour was the first of a series; Mr. Attlee is

fully aware of the moribund condition of local Labour parties and of the crying need for political evangelism. If Communism is strong in South Wales, it is lying low: Mr. Attlee was received with great enthusiasm by the workers in the coal valleys, in the munition works and on the historical battlefield of Tonypandy, where the miners once fought pitched battles for their rights. Mr. Attlee can speak with far greater vigour and effect than his reputation for a quiet, clear-headed Parliamentarian gives him credit for: his theme was reconstruction, and his appeal to the South Wales miners to give their hands to winning the war and their brains to shaping the peace was enthusiastically received. All this was good. But I wonder how many of the older men recalled as they went home the promises of the last war and the story of the broken pledge to the miners—a pledge still unfulfilled twenty years after the Sankey Report? What Mr. Attlee needs to put his success on a firm basis is to be able to cite one indubitable piece of Socialist reorganisation needed for winning the war and carried out while the war is on.

* * *

The National Labour Party was always rather a weedy affair, conceived as it was in trickery and born in confusion. It is now almost dead of malnutrition. Mr. Malcolm MacDonald's Irishman's rise follows on the departure from office of three other National Labour Ministers, Lord de la Warr, Sir Ernest Bennett and Mr. Kenneth Lindsay. Of course there is the curious case of Mr. Harold Nicolson, who was never a Labour man, but jumped straight into Parliament wearing, as I remember remarking at the time, a coat that had been turned by somebody else. Personally, I think he is rather wasted in office; there is no better way of stifling a brilliant critic and writer than by putting him into the Ministry of Information. Commander King-Hall is another national figure, but his influence has nothing to do with National Labour. In fact the Party has ceased to exist; as it departs on tip-toe from the scene I doubt if anyone will make any fuss.

* * *

The Tories have always been better than their opponents at discarding people who are no longer any use to them and in forgetting past history which embarrasses them. Labour circles have never so well acquired this technique; they bicker about their own past even more than about their probable future. I was reminded of this when I saw the shockingly curt obituary notice which the *Times* gave to Lady Chamberlain, widow of Sir Austen. Why not remind people to-day of her famous Mediterranean mission, about her propaganda for Mussolini and other discredited persons? Lady Chamberlain, who, I have always heard, was a charming person, has earned for herself at least a footnote in history.

* * *

Something drastic must be done about the problem of civilian internees. There is something in military etiquette or tradition which does secure reasonable or at least cautious handling of combatant prisoners, but no country seems capable of eliminating sickening abuses in its treatment of helpless civilians. That stout champion of decency, Josiah Wedgwood, is hot on the trail of the S.S. *Dunera* scandal and he does not mince his words. This, he declares, is a case of barbarism as only the Middle Ages and Hitler's Germany have experienced. It relates to refugees deported from this country to Australia, and according to the reports they were shamefully manhandled and robbed on the voyage. The only redeeming features are the effect on public opinion in Australia and the reports from refugees themselves of sympathetic treatment in that country. Contemporaneously I have received horrible accounts of the situation of interned refugees in France. These people who fled from Nazi persecution are now confined in inhuman conditions at Guers and other camps. Cannot the United States move in this matter? Mr. Roosevelt is in a position to make representations and to ask for a world standard of decent treatment for detained persons everywhere. I should like the U.S.A. to go further and offer sanctuary in its own borders to say half-a-million of these unhappy and friendless people. That would be a grand gesture and it would have a force which I am afraid is lacking in the appeals from America that we should open up Palestine or that other countries should find homes for the unhappy victims of German racialism.

* * *

If the Germans had conquered Libya and were well on the way to capture Abyssinia they would have a regime ready to impose overnight. Even traffic cops in white gloves would be on their beats. Have we any plans ready? We incur great obligations—the article in this issue explains some of their complexities in Abyssinia. It will certainly not be sufficient to reproduce in new territories the conditions that we have so far failed to abolish in some of our colonial regimes. I have been reading some of the reports of the Conference on "Civil Liberty in the Colonial Empire," held last week-end by the National Council for Civil Liberties. It was a valuable conference, addressed by people who knew their subject. It did not suggest to me that the British were worse than other Empires: on the contrary, there has always been a democratic force in this country working towards a better and less selfish form of colonial government. After the last war we even went to the point of seriously considering the possibilities of international administration, and attempted, here and there, to fashion a policy that would suit the native population rather than the handful of white settlers. But reaction has never really been out of the saddle. The Sedition and Deportation Ordinances of British West Africa show that Regulation 2D is not a wartime novelty in the Empire, and the report on Cyprus suggests that if the Nazis ever take over that island (which God and the Navy forbid) they would find a population already half-inured to their form of government.

* * *

Mr. A. P. Herbert, always a stickler for accuracy, writes to complain of two terrible inaccuracies in this journal last week. The first was that we spoke of 90 out of 150 aircraft being destroyed in one attack on Malta, whereas it was, as Mr. Churchill told us, in two or three days. The second was that this success was not wholly scored in an attack on Malta, since forty of the aeroplanes were destroyed on the ground. Why these corrections should be thought to lessen a remarkable success or should affect my point that Mr. Churchill wisely kept this tit-bit of information up his sleeve for his broadcast, Mr. Herbert only knows.

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Stranger still, I see that A. P. H. is very snooty about the poor old *Spectator*. I have always thought it a most respectable paper myself and I cannot guess why Mr. Herbert thinks that the readers of *Punch* will like to hear it so often described as "the bilious weekly." It is true that there has been a lot of discussion in the *Spectator* about War Aims and so forth, but that is common not only among the intellectuals of the *Spectator* but among soldiers I meet in trains, and most of all among people in the Services and the Ministry of Information, who find themselves baffled to answer queries and to think out consistent propaganda. I notice one of Mr. Herbert's jibes about the bilious weekly is that it would like to summon a parliament in Germany to instigate Prohibition. Now I suppose anyone would like to see a genuine parliament in Germany, because it would mean that there wasn't a Hitler, but why Prohibition? I don't remember that the *Spectator* has ever stood for it, though I doubt if it has been as heartily on the other side as this journal, which once had a leading article, I regret to say, reprinted by the brewers. No, I think we weekly journalists should stand by each other, and I wonder what Mr. Herbert has to say now about some remarks of his to the London Press Club Ladies' Luncheon rather more than a year ago:

> As regards that grand old neutral, or rather that chronic neutral, America, I will say this: by all means let America do what she will about the war, that is her right. But for God's sake don't let her have anything to do with the peace. Last time she left us with a large baby called the League of Nations, and now she is, I understand, busily engaged in dressing up its poor little corpse and calling it Federal Union. I have no doubt that once again after the war she would pop off home the moment the child began to yell. No, siree.

What about that for bile?

* * *

One of the reforms which must be imposed after the war is in the complex and exclusive government of the City. Could there be a more blatant example of the divorce of wealth from common life? Now that the Guildhall, the Wren churches and the halls have suffered so much in the Blitz Londoners feel a vague unhappy sense of loss, but what attempt was made to associate the hundreds of thousands of workers who poured daily into the City with the traditions embodied in these buildings? What does this civic life mean to ordinary men except a square mile of caretakers in which certain comfortable people sometimes inbibe turtle soup? These great traditions have been narrowed down to privileges and picturesque survival. Once the pageantry meant something to the apprentice; it means little or nothing to the office clerk. That youth could have been introduced to and absorbed into the City's great traditions is shown by the spirit which informs the Honourable Artillery Company. This regiment really does inspire its members with the feeling that they are in a

great line of history stretching back to the train bands. I have said before that the War Office has taken too narrow a view of the Army's role in the defence of Britain. I should like to have seen two battalions of the H.A.C. quartered in and around the Tower with the order of the day "Men, this is your City, this is your Cathedral, these are your halls and churches. Defend them." If this had been done last September there would be fewer ruins to mourn to-day.

* * *

In view of a recent decision in a libel case I hasten to record that any criticisms I have made in these columns of Herr Hitler related to him solely in his capacity as politician and in no wise reflected upon his ability as an author. I thought his early work *Mein Kampf* showed skill, force and a certain promise, and was not too heavy to hold as a bed-book. I have always regretted that his absorption in political affairs prevented him from devoting all his time to literature. It is possible that in the near future Herr Hitler may lay down his burden of office and find leisure to take up his pen again. Not, I again hasten to add, that there is any danger that his already published work will pass into oblivion.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to Pat White.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

One of your correspondents thinks the voter is responsible for the decay of parliamentary government. That is a mistake. British Governments, as a rule, represent a minority of the voters, and never more than a 55 per cent. of the total. In the past 20 years, voters have consistently condemned Socialism, but politicians have as consistently ignored the voter and turned every question to the Socialist and Communist point of view.—Letter in *Truth*.

Learn French, Italian, German for controlling subjugated enemies after war. Very good pronunciation. Easily taught by: —Advt. in the *Berkeley and Sharpness Gazette*.

Sub-Leader and Volunteer was horrified and amazed to read that German girls are being accepted in the A.T.S. There have been many appeals for more and more A.T.S., but how can English girls be expected to answer this call when it means that they will probably have to work alongside Germans? —*Daily Sketch*.

If Mr. James Jewkes means banks are making enormous profits I would suggest he looks up the banks' balance sheets. He will find this is far from true. The biggest bank in the world, the Midland Bank, is making rather less than £2,000,000 profit.—Letter in provincial paper.

The frugality of the lunch was exemplified by the fare. This was: Oeuf Poché Cressonnière, Coq au Vin, Petit Pois St. Cloud, Pommes Fondantes, Biscuit Riviera.—*Daily Telegraph*.

But the Church has apparently been shaken by the so-called "Higher Criticism" of the Bible, launched by German scholars. It might well be called the first German offensive.—Correspondent in *Oxford Mail*.

Such a boy will make a natural manager of men. He knows instinctively that their care is his first consideration, just as a good sportsman sees to his horse after a day's hunting, before he has his own hot bath.—Letter in the *Times*.

THE FUTURE GIBBON

[In his broadcast on February 9th Mr. Churchill said: "The events in Libya are only part of the story. They are only part of the story of the decline and fall of the Italian Empire that will not take the future Gibbon so long as the original work." The following is an extract from that future work.—Ed. *N.S.&N.*]

. . . The grandiose ambitions of the renegade Socialist who became dictator of Italy were founded rather on the romantic imaginings of a Renaissance adventurer than on the sober judgment of a responsible statesman; the circumstances of his downfall show that he understood neither the century he disgraced nor the nation whose trust he abused. An earlier chapter has described the stratagems by which this braggart tyrant took advantage of the fears of employers of labour who in a period of grave social unrest valued the security of their propertied position above their nation's reputation for culture and humanity. We shall not weary our readers by a repetition of the manner in which this hero led his glorious march to Rome in a railway carriage nor shall we again describe the vile methods by which the most enlightened and distinguished of Italian citizens were exiled, tortured or murdered to satisfy the lust of the swaggering bravos who took their name from the ancient and honourable emblem of Roman justice. The *fasces*, once the symbol of law, became in their hands the implement of tyranny.

For eighteen years the Duce, to use the title which his vanity enjoined, strutted and ranted on the high platform of European politics. The tribute of the Fascist salute and the interminable plaudits of his youthful admirers sufficed to drown the voices of caution and the protests of sanity. Satisfied with his achievements in draining the Pontine Marshes, in ensuring the punctuality of the Italian railway services, and reopening some of the finer vistas of a more Imperial Rome, this heir to the throne of the Antonines took little account of the increasing poverty of his country and proposed to build, upon the precarious basis of an inflated propaganda and a corrupt secret police, an Imperial edifice which could only have been securely founded on a population with a stomach for conquest and an industrial development far beyond the limited scope of Italian resources. The credulous eyes of the young Fascists and the astonished attention of the foreign visitor were equally attracted in the heart of the Italian capital by a progidious inscription, graven in stone and accompanied by a map no less imposing in appearance; in this unambiguous manner the Duce announced his intention of restoring to Rome the splendours of her ancient Empire, which once extended, as the map boldly proclaimed, as far as the wall which in days of unchallenged power the Emperor Hadrian built across the wild and forbidding moorlands of Northumberland. Such an announcement seemed designed to tempt Providence, even if it failed to disturb the phlegmatic and tolerant people of Britain; yet the Italian Dictator might well have recalled that the Power which his insolence challenged could in its emergency summon the resources of the world to its aid and maintain, in spite of his numerous fleet of swift and mobile vessels, the command of the sea which only his presumption dared to describe as *mare nostrum*.

If this braggadocio so long remained unpunished, the responsibility must be laid upon the divided purposes and hesitating counsels of democratic statesmanship. Nominally united in a League to defend the peace which they had established by the Treaty of Versailles, the rulers of Britain and France could yet agree on no honest or resolute policy. Above all anxious to avoid the war which everyone anticipated, they allowed themselves to be intimidated by threats of attack which they could have safely disregarded and cajoled by promises of friendship which they should have spurned as dishonourable. War itself swiftly exposed the hollowness of pretensions whose falsity had long been apparent to discerning eyes.

For nine months the hesitating guardians of the peace watched the Italian legions muster for an assault upon the most backward and harmless member of the nations assembled at Geneva; rather than risk a quarrel with a dictator whom in part they feared and in part regarded as a future ally against a greater enemy, they failed in their duty and permitted the unfortunate people of Abyssinia to sustain an onslaught as barbarous and unprovoked as any in the bloodstained annals of the twentieth century. When stirred by the just indignation of the common people, they tardily attempted interference, the sanctions they imposed were so half-heartedly enforced and their moral effect so weakened by futile and dishonourable proposals of compromise at the expense of the victim they were pledged to defend, that the results of their gestures on behalf of peace proved more disastrous than total compliance in the crime of war. Abandoned, the miserable Africans tried in vain to repel with spears and rifles the invasion of tanks, aeroplanes and poison gas. The swift conclusion of this unequal contest, gratifying as it was to a dictator's self-esteem, gave less satisfaction to Mussolini than the total discomfiture of the powerful States whose pledges to thwart his purpose had availed only to create in Italy that unity of sentiment which the Duce had failed by his own efforts to achieve.

The taste for glory that throughout history has been inseparable from dictatorship has never been satiated by a single conquest, and the next military exploit of the Italian adventurer was in the Iberian Peninsular, where his intrigues and diplomacy had played a decisive part in precipitating civil war. Once again Italian armies crossed the seas for the two-fold purpose of gratifying the ambition of their master and of effecting the subjugation of a proud and patriotic people. Though they won little renown in this cruel and protracted struggle beyond that which is accorded to the soldier who is swift in escaping from the battlefield, their adventure was not wholly

without profit for the Duce, whose supple diplomacy once again achieved what the valour of his troops could not have availed to procure. No situation could have been more favourable for the disciple of Macchiavelli; he well knew how to exploit the divisions of Britain and France, where the richer citizens sympathised with a rebel general who, bearing the cross of Christ on his standard, claimed to be extirpating Bolshevism, while the working masses with a truer instinct were vociferous in their support of the cause of the impoverished Spanish population in its struggle against a feudalism which no longer pretended chivalry and a clericalism which had long forfeited the right to the title of Christian. An adroit pretence of friendship induced the Prime Minister of Britain to accord him recognition as conqueror of Abyssinia and to enter into an understanding whose falsity and hypocrisy were ill-concealed by the inappropriate title of "gentleman's agreement." Historians will record as the moment of his greatest triumph the humiliation of the British people when a popular Foreign Secretary resigned at his request; they will also remark the ironical circumstance that precisely four years later this amiable and handsome diplomat returned to the office from which he had been cozened in time to witness and participate in the discomfiture of the tyrant whose trickery had engineered his downfall.

The pretensions of Mussolini could not survive the test of war in which the principal military Powers were involved. The disciple of Macchiavelli had disobeyed one of the maxims most strictly enjoined upon the Prince; he had accepted as an ally a Prince more cunning and more powerful than himself. At first the tutor of the German dictator he became, during the struggle for Austria, his rival; only to find himself, as the tramp of the German hordes reverberated across the Brenner, reduced to the humiliating status of a satellite; the lord of Imperial Italy was not even able to preserve the valleys and vineyards of his native country from the abhorrent violation of the Nazi goosestep. Securely bound to the German juggernaut, he yet strove to win the spoils of victory, while escaping the dust of battle. The catastrophic rout of France appeared but the preliminary to the enforced surrender of Britain; for a moment his dream of a vast Empire ready to fall into his hands through the collapse of the parent country seemed within a few months of realisation. Turning first on the weakest prey left within the range of his warriors, the might of Mussolini's Rome was flung against the Greek State, whose soldiers, hardened though they were by the mountainous nature of their native soil, seemed too few to withstand the onslaught of the far more numerous legions of Italy. But the part of the jackal is not always as safe as it is disgusting. Once again the god of war revealed his incalculable quality; the Italian legions were thrown back in rout and Greece, after more than two thousand years, was revenged upon Rome for the humiliations inflicted upon her by more glorious Caesars. Meanwhile the British lion, less decadent than Fascist boasting suggested, had turned to bay. Once again the Italian warrior, compelled to march to battle at Caesar's whim, showed that the genius of his country lay in the beneficent arts of peace rather than in the brutal science of mechanised warfare; with a discretion, which we applaud in these more enlightened days as the better part of valour, but which ill-accorded with the martial boasts of Fascism, the Italian armies everywhere fled before the onslaught of the armies of General Wavell whose campaign across the African desert must rank among the swiftest and best considered in the varied history of war. In a few crowded weeks this remarkable soldier swept the Italian forces six hundred miles along the coast of Africa, until, out-generalled, outmanoeuvred, and out-fought, they surrendered ignominously in their thousands at Tobruk and Benghazi. Meanwhile the wrecks of Italian ships in the bay of Taranto and the ruins of the noble harbour of Genoa exposed to the eyes of the whole world that the British fleet, not long before pronounced too weak to stand against Italy on behalf of the League of Nations, was still when the cause of Empire was at stake, the same majestic instrument of power which in past centuries had given Britain her world predominance. In the air British pilots, though outnumbered by a force which in the Italian imagination was to blacken the skies, were no less successful in answering Mussolini's taunt of decadence. As a final and most humiliating blow the vainglorious dictator of Italy lived to see not only the ancient Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland fall into the hands of his enemies, but also to hear that the Emperor of Abyssinia whose crown he had condescended to place on the brow of the King of Italy had returned to take his place among his people, who everywhere sought against the stranded forces of the Roman Empire the revenge that savages, not more barbarous than their conquerors, might be expected to extort. . . .

OUT OF THE WOOD

No one wants to boast that we are out of the wood, but my own impression is that efforts which have been made and are being made are far from fruitless. —Lord Simon, on the financial situation, House of Lords, Feb. 11th.

Not without fruit is the National lending,
Not without limit the Treasury's "gap,"
Not without curb is the spiral ascending,
Not without feathers Lord Kindersley's cap.

Not within sight is the "gap's" computation,
Not within range of the national thrift,
Not within compass of loans or taxation,
Not within sight is the end of the drift.

Not with the Banks' patriotic advances,
Not with war savings as now understood,
Not with old means shall we square our finances,
Not with Sir Kingsley be out of the Wood.

SAGITTARIUS

FOOD v. BRICKS

In 1921, the Battle for the Fields of Britain was lost across the urban food counters. Politicians have been blamed for this monumental betrayal of home agriculture, and a handsome share of discredit is due to them for their failure to put up any sort of a fight for the land. But ultimately it comes back on the people themselves, who had no feeling or understanding about the land and its life, who were quite prepared to sacrifice the countryside they pretended to love in the interests of bigger and better usury and a good rake-off for the growing army of middlemen.

There are still too many who think that milk grows in bottles, fruit in cans and sausages in cellophane paper. How easily do the long shelves in the town shops, stocked in peacetime with a variety of goods from overseas, hide the picture in the background of the village where life is dying out, the grassed-down field where the arts of husbandry are being quickly forgotten. So many who walk at week-ends through the countryside forget that the landscape that they admire has only been preserved by the care and love and toil lavished on it by those who have made the land their way of life. "We must use the land to produce our milk, and some vegetables, and fresh eggs," they say. "And English fruit is very good, when it's not too dear. But we needn't worry too much about things like corn and beef and bacon. We can get them cheaper and better from abroad."

They have no idea that in saying this they are pronouncing the doom of village life, that farming cannot be divided up and parcelled out like contracts for making the component parts of a motor car. No one puts it to them that the plough, even in peacetime, is essential to fertility and we must plough for milk and plough for grass just as much as for corn; but that ploughing must mean corn-growing and root-growing, with cattle to eat the roots and tread the straw to put dung back into the future cornfields again. They see no difference between a nation of cowkeepers and a nation of skilled, resourceful farmers. They forget that the most valuable product of the soil should be the men and women it produces.

If we are to have a rural civilisation, urban opinion must be roused and educated in these matters. Even if the most precise guarantees ever known were given by the most upright politicians who ever lived, agriculture cannot be permanently safe until the people of this country understand what that industry means and are determined not merely that "farming must pay," but that rural life must flourish and grow to its full stature. For no Parliament can bind its successors. It has become essential that the country should explain itself to the other 85 per cent. of the population who live in towns.

At the moment, there is much talk of planning a new Britain. There are plans for new or improved towns, for garden cities, for "satellite" towns, for more and better roads to link some up and by-pass others. Some are already saying, for example, that the unwieldy, amorphous mass of habitations we call London must be given a fairer and more rational shape. And more factories are to be moved out into the country.

All this is well and good. But where is agriculture in such a plan? Where the voice of its leaders? Where the leaders themselves? In any society that understood about agriculture, the land would come first in any planning scheme, and for a very simple reason. The land is a limited quantity, and when good farming land is lost to housing and road schemes, the nation becomes the poorer, for ever, by that amount of lost food production. If a factory, or even a town, is demolished, it is not of supreme importance from the point of view of national production. They can be built elsewhere and just as much produced. Not so the land. It is irreplaceable. Since the last war, 500,000 more acres of Britain have become imprisoned under bricks and mortar and macadam, and a large proportion of it was the best farming land; for this is just the sort of land most readily chosen for housing, being usually flat, well-drained and easy to build upon. This involves not merely the loss of so much corn-land or (more often) land well suited to grow market-garden crops for towns that adjoin it. The soul of the countryside as well as its body is destroyed, for what farmer or landowner will bother himself with crop yields, or milk records to save a halfpenny or two per gallon, when the vision of building sites at £500 per acre is suddenly dangled before eyes accustomed to agricultural land values at £20 or £30 per acre? A farmer is not so different from all other men that the easy way to wealth offered by speculation has not attractions for him. The result often is that the owner sells a few parcels of land, lives on his unexpected profits while awaiting a better bid for some of the remainder, and no longer bothers to farm much of his land at all. Why should he? It's all due (he hopes) to become bricks and mortar quite soon. This queer process is known as "land development." It lops odd bits off farms, so that they are no longer workable units; it presents farmers with the problem of planning their work, which must often be planned five or six years ahead, to meet an unknown but continuous shrinking in acreage. It sells the house and farm over the tenant's head, so that he may live for years in the enervating shadow of uncertainty. Where it operates, in fact, it is the best of many devices we have yet invented for destroying the values of rural life in body, mind and soul. During this war, its results have produced almost insuperable obstacles to increased food production in parts of the Home Counties, and probably elsewhere.

It must be evident that this wasteful, insane, immoral system cannot be allowed to continue if we are in earnest about a decent Britain after the war. Agriculture has lost too many good acres, too much good life, already. Hardly anyone, in fact, any longer seriously disputes the need to decide how our land is to be used. But I doubt very much if it will be enough merely to give agriculture and forestry a seat with other interests on any national body that may be set up in future to plan the use of our land. There is too much danger that these twin Cinderellas will be outvoted every time, especially since they suffer the terrible stigma of creating less rateable value than houses and by-pass roads. This damns them from the start with the local authorities, who have much power and are not unversed in wielding it. If the use of land for agricultural purposes is to come first, the most sensible thing is to take it first and empower some national lands commission to earmark the land available that is needed for agriculture and forestry. To do this, however, it is necessary to know how much agriculture we intend to have after the war. Shall we, for instance, grow sugar beet? On that depends the future of much land in East Anglia. Are we to encourage mixed farming with the hurdled flock? In the present state of our knowledge the future of much land in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Berkshire and the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire wolds depends upon that. Large areas of Essex and Huntingdonshire will again be laid waste unless it is financially possible to grow corn on their heavy soils. The decisions we make about home beef production will vitally affect the amount of cultivated land in practically every province of Britain.

But we cannot sit down and do nothing about all this, awaiting the end of the war. Such policies cannot be produced in a few months, or even in a year. I suggest that the first important step is to survey our country; it is what any reasonable person would do on inheriting an estate in which he intended to take an interest. The Minister of Agriculture has recently caused a survey of farms to be carried out. No details of it have been disclosed, so it is impossible to say if it has been comprehensive enough to meet this case. But it must have collected an immense amount of valuable information that will expedite the task of discovering what this country can produce in the way of food and how much it is likely to cost to put the land in proper order. It might even be possible to draw up a series of estimates according to the types of land that are to be included; so much if you want to cultivate the heavy clays, so much if a system is to be adopted that keeps the light lands fertile. On such evidence final decisions could be made, and then we would at least know where we were. The suitable farming land would be permanently scheduled, also the land for the greater afforested areas we must have. It would be the nation's responsibility to see that conditions were retained to ensure good farming and fertile soil on the scheduled farming land. Potential site values would no longer be one of the worst enemies of agriculture, a big step forward would be made in cleaning up the existing chaos, and, whatever the amount of farming it is decided to maintain, the unscheduled land would at least suffer a fairly quick death instead of slow and painful strangulation. It would be handed over to the towns and the speculators.

But we have now an opportunity, a tremendous opportunity that may never recur, to establish again good life and a vigorous farming industry over a very large part of that 85 per cent. of the face of Britain that is not now covered by towns and roads. The war has brought us back to essentials and made us realise that the soil is not just a rather expensive plaything that ought to be kept going for the look of the thing and because it is amusing at week-ends. The soil to-day is the nation's life. There has also been a change of spirit. Men are thinking, with a queer sort of home-sickness, of peaceful occupations in our own incomparable countryside when this nightmare is over. Thoughts about "the standard of living" are being exchanged for ideas about a standard of happiness, and to some, reasonable security and a modest income earned by an interesting job under natural conditions seem more attractive than a fat weekly wage cheque or a bursting bank balance. That is not new. I have had all too many letters in the past from city clerks asking: "How can I get a little farm? I'm sick of this life." Hitherto, it has been impossible to offer them any hope. For although there is a fast-moving escalator from the villages to the towns, there has been no ladder back to the land. But need this be so? Half a dozen possible solutions give the negative to that.

But the fact that men's thoughts are now once again focusing on the land as they have not since we made such a horrible mess of a similar situation twenty years ago makes it extremely urgent that we should strike while the iron is hot. We should begin here and now to tell the people in the towns about the country, about their food and how they get it, about the life that goes on outside the cities' walls in England's seven thousand villages. Most people have farming in their blood not more than two generations back. The instinct and the interest are there, waiting to be awakened, for it is only in very recent years there has been this monstrous divorce between the majority of our population and the source to which they owe their existence. Within the next year or two our rural civilisation will be given new life or irretrievably destroyed. Yet hardly one townsman in a hundred knows what is in the balance or dreams that it concerns him. The time to act is now, if we wish to make quite certain we never write on the tombstone of rural England "Died with the goodwill of all from a general misunderstanding."

L. F. EASTERBROOK

A CHALLENGE

I HAD a friendly but admonitory letter the other day from a stranger who had been reading some of my stuff. "I gather," he wrote, "that you smoke and drink whisky and eat meat and that you like tea not quite boiling hot. Now I do not wish to be personal . . . but it has come as rather a disappointment to me that you should like these things. You may agree with me that they are not good things—in which case I shall be more than pleased. On the other hand, you may regard me as a crank, which you are perfectly entitled to do, and you may have a philosophy in these every-day matters which I do not share. But I would like to see in some article of yours a recognition of the other point of view, a discussion as to whether we ought to kill animals and eat them, and whether we ought to give our bodies a regular dose of alcohol and nicotine every day, which they, serving our selfish interests only too well, endeavour to get rid of as quickly as possible, until eventually, worn out under the strain, they give way, and we die."

That is certainly a challenge, but I grew up in a world of challenges. As a small boy, I was challenged if I whistled on the Sabbath Day. I was challenged even if I ran, instead of proceeding at a walking pace on the Sabbath Day. I was challenged if I accepted a surreptitious peppermint drop from a stranger in the pew at the Sunday morning service, though that was on the ground of manners rather than of morals. Another challenge came when in the vanity of boyhood I

wanted to take a walking-stick to church. There was yet another when, staying on a farm, I proposed one Sunday to walk several miles to a church in the nearest town, not, I admit, to hear a sermon, but to worship an extremely beautiful girl afar off: my aunt said that the walk was more than a Sabbath Day's journey and that it was forbidden in the New Testament; and there was no other course for me but to submit.

Do not think, however, that this world of challenges and taboos was an unhappy world. It had its moments of irritation and its moments of rebellion; but if the people against whom you rebel go on heaping kindnesses on you, how is it possible to feel wronged and miserable for long? We believed that our elders had rights in those days, and made the necessary concessions to them. There were no cards in the house except packs for Snap and Happy Families, but we missed the Devil's Picture-books as little as Julius Caesar missed cigars. Other children were taken every year to the pantomime, and, hearing their reports, we longed for Arabia; but life was full of interest even without pantomimes. After all, there was the circus, which, for some strange reason, Puritans looked on with greater tolerance than the theatre. There were also Rugby football and lacrosse—played in those days, like hurling, by swift-running men—and cricket. And there were the sea and confectioners' shops and one's friends: challenges and taboos could not entirely overcloud such a world as that. Besides, there were the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which were still as exciting as a later generation found the stories of Edgar Wallace.

As time went on, the chief taboos were against theatre-going, smoking, and drinking. The taboo against theatre-going must have been removed when I was about fourteen years old and went to see *The Mikado;* but even some time after that I was challenged at the entrance to the theatre by a man with fanatically glaring eyes who asked me: "If the theatre's burnt down while you're inside, where do you expect to go to?" It was a fair question, but I did not know the answer. All I know was that I had no sense of sin as I made my way up to the sixpenny gallery, even though the morals of some of the musical burlesques and farces were conspicuously unorthodox. As for smoking, it is hard to say why our elders warned us against it so assiduously. Most of them smoked and they looked extremely happy while smoking; but, when talking to the younger generation, they all affirmed in the most solemn manner that, if they had their lives to live over again, they would not smoke, and, having said this, they would nod at us lovingly through clouds of tobacco as though they had performed an avuncular duty in warning us against some mysterious danger. They did not say that smoking was a vice; they did not, indeed, say what it was; they merely said that, if they had their lives to live over again, they would not do it. As they looked in such a perfect state of bliss in their armchairs, however, while doing what they would not have been doing if they had had their lives to live over again, most of us of the younger sort envied the tribe of smokers, instead of regarding them as an awful warning, and one by one joined their ranks by way first of Duke's Cameo cigarettes and, later on, with a G.B.D. pipe filled with Tortoiseshell mixture. I still think that an old man smoking a pipe and a kettle singing are two things that produce an extraordinary atmosphere of happiness.

As for drinking, that undoubtedly was regarded as a vice. Many honest citizens dared to enter the public houses only through back doors in order to indulge a taste that had been general since the days before Noah. We were taught "*Nunc est bibendum*" at school; but outside school we were not supposed to put Horace's philosophy into practice. We were appealed to in particular, for the sake of some unspecified weaker brother, not to drink anything stronger than mineral waters. Alas, we ourselves were the weaker brethren as we sat in Kinahan's drinking small clarets hot and shandygaff—the A.B.C. that began the alphabet of stronger cordials.

Let it not be thought, however, that, because many of us have followed the example of our elders rather than their precepts, we have done so without heart-searchings. I, for one, have revolted against and abstained from, not only tobacco and malt liquors, but meat. I am sure the ideal life needs none of these things, and I doubt whether men a thousand years hence will still be smoking and eating meat; as for malt liquors, I am not so certain. Smoking, after all, is merely a fashion, and a fairly modern fashion at that. If we can trust Dr. Johnson, it had already gone out in the second half of the eighteenth century. "Smoking," he said, "has gone out. To be sure, it is a shocking thing, blowing smoke out of our mouths into other people's mouths, eyes, and noses, and having the same thing done to us. Yet I cannot account why a thing which requires so little exertion, and yet preserves the mind from total vacuity, should have gone out. Every man has something by which he calms himself: beating with his feet, or so." The question for posterity to decide is whether it is preferable to calm itself by smoking or by beating with its feet. I am an optimist, and I think it will choose beating with its feet.

Smoking and drinking I regard as confessions of failure—failure to calm oneself from internal resources. Saints do not need such aids to serenity. Mr. Shaw, born with ten times an ordinary man's share of good humour, does not need them. We weaker brethren, however, are neither saints nor Shaws. We have become as dependent on our luxuries as a lame man on his stick. We do not defend ourselves against those who criticise us, except when they tell us that we are living contrary to the laws of Nature. Is it not as natural to use tobacco as to use soap? I doubt whether it is natural even to eat bread.

Meat-eating raises different questions. Obviously it is fairly natural to eat meat. I agree, however, that man may conceivably reach a plane on which he will no longer think it right to eat meat. Meat-eating I regard as being a pleasure on the same level as fox-hunting and stag-hunting—essentially the pleasure of a barbarian. Man, however, is still to a large extent a barbarian; and some of the advanced philosophies of recent years seem to me to be merely attempts to teach him new ways of being barbarous while giving up some of the old ones. As a barbarian in a barbarous world, I confess I feel no pang of conscience in eating a beefsteak. I have felt such a pang more than once in my life and subsisted for a time on dishes named "mock goose" and "like chicken" and, as might be guessed, vast numbers of nut rissoles. But, whether through greed of pleasure or through common sense, I have returned to the table of my fathers—a prodigal back from the husks and eager for the fatted calf.

My apologia, I have been told, is hypocritical. But is it certainly so? Mr. Henry Williamson wrote a book some years ago in which he argued that the survival of stag-hunting on Exmoor made for the greater happiness of the stags. He did not say that stags enjoy being hunted, as some enthusiasts have said, without producing any evidence, that foxes enjoy being hunted; but he maintained that stags are now cared for and enabled to lead healthy and happy lives till the day of their death, whereas, if stag-hunting disappeared, they would be neglected and become verminous and ultimately be exterminated by farmers, who looked on them as a nuisance. Is it better for a stag to live a happy life and then be hunted, or not to live at all? I do not know. In the same way, I do not know whether it is better for cattle to live happy, unapprehensive lives and then to die sudden deaths—or not to live at all. If I were sure that non-existence would be preferable for the mass of cattle and sheep to existence on the present terms, I should certainly feel a pang of conscience on sitting down to a meal in a restaurant. But I am not sure. Illogically enough, I think of the civilised man of the future as a vegetarian. Meanwhile, I continue to eat my ration of meat, a barbarian in a barbarous world, in which the animals on the farms look curiously unresentful of their fate.

Y. Y.

LETTER TO ARTHUR CALDER MARSHALL

IN your article, "The Pink Decade," you criticise "us," as you call the Left-wing writers of the 'thirties. I am answering this criticism not because I dispute your premises, but because I think that, in drawing your conclusions, you fall into exactly the errors of judgment which perhaps made "us" fail both as writers and politicians.

You say that "we," the writers of the 'thirties, must look back with feelings of shame on our books and our actions of the past ten years. You then go on to explain that, broadly speaking, we all agreed that the society in which we lived was doomed, and yet "we continued to enjoy our privileged positions," putting in an occasional appearance at a public meeting, perhaps going to Spain, but otherwise doing little about it. Some fought in Spain: "to them," you say, "all honour is due."

So far, I agree. You then come forward with a sweeping simplification which, although it is not new (since it was the main point of Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*), does at least sound final and decisive. You point to the fundamental mistake as our refusal "to abandon the class we denounced," and to "join the working class."

"Giving up one's privileged position," "joining the working class," "abandoning the class we denounced": if these phrases mean anything, they should surely mean giving up money, family connections, and all that entails privilege; getting a job in a factory, living in a slum, and trying to write from the centre of that way of living and that environment. But to do this one would require more than a belief

in political materialism; one would require the faith in life, at every level of existence, of a saint.

If you had decided really to join the working class, I would respect you, and I would think that indeed a bold and desperate decision had come out of these years. But, actually, the rest of your essay proves that you do not in the least mean what you say. You have already fallen into one of the worst faults of political writers. You say one thing and you mean something quite different. You say: Renounce all privileges: join with the workers: live your politics: act. But when you translate these phrases into terms of action they become: Devise a scheme for publishing books cheaply and selling them to the masses: get a good, well-paid job as foreign correspondent to some great newspaper in "half-a-dozen capitals of Europe and America": co-operate with a political party (I wonder which one you can be thinking of?).

You—just as much as "we" of the past whom you condemn—substitute for a complete break with environment a programme of literary and world politics only slightly different from all that we have been discussing so unavailingly during the past ten years.

Even so, your suggestions in themselves are of little value. Writers, you say, should have tried to sell their books at 6*d.* or 1*s.* to the masses instead of at 7*s.* 6*d.* to the rich. You imply that "we" never thought of this, because we were unwilling to sacrifice our royalties. This is surely unfair. Most of us were extremely willing to work for little or no pay. If *Left Review* could be kept going for several years without a single contributor ever being paid, why shouldn't writers have leapt at the chance of selling their books in tens of thousands, even if the royalties were "for a short time" reduced? Your whole argument is misleading. The real reason why such a scheme could not have succeeded is because "the masses" do not have the time and leisure and education to read and write the best books. Until there is a social revolution, writers are bound to write for an educated, leisured class of readers: working class writers automatically enter into this literary tradition of the middle classes and do not write for their own class, who, with few exceptions, do not have the time nor lead a suitable life to read them.

You say that "the training these writers needed was . . . acting as foreign correspondents in half a dozen capitals in Europe and America." So this is what "joining the working class" has become; having a job on a capitalist newspaper; well paid, too, because you go on to say: "Unfortunately there was no newspaper magnate so beneficent as to give them jobs of this sort." And why should you expect a newspaper magnate to be such a mug?

I have not torn your article to pieces: but it seems to me that it just falls to bits in my hands. All the same there is little satisfaction in finding that "we" (in whom you include yourself) have learnt so little from the lessons of the past ten years.

As writers, in the 'thirties, "we" suffered from two intuitions: (1) a sense of what was going to happen, in most of which we were completely justified; (2) a sense of being *outside* the social machinery of our time about which we sensed so much, and within which we were living.

I need not discuss (1). We forecast correctly; that is where we were least mistaken; (2) is where we went wrong, and where you again go wrong. We were frustrated by the sense that the inexorable machinery of doomed politics was beyond our reach; whilst we felt equally shut out from the life of the people at the level of most compressed living; the workers, socially fettered, who alone might have stopped the political machine, to release forces of joy within themselves and within us.

"We" were convinced that the social system was wrong, yet our conviction left us powerless when we tried to communicate it in words or political action. The reason why all "we" did was half-hearted was because we suspected that it was leading us away from our goal, writing, without leading to political results either. In a revealing sentence, you write: "Some fought in Spain; and to them all honour; but the rest were spectators." But don't these alternatives of either giving up writing for war, or else remaining a spectator, offer a genuine dilemma to the writer? It is absurd to dismiss this dilemma as simply an "excuse."

You say that "the artists of the 'thirties who will interest posterity are the men of action, Malraux, Bates, Silone." Of these, I am prepared to admit as a genuine combination of man of action and man of letters, Malraux. Bates is not comparable to him as a writer, nor as a man of action; Silone is a liberal in the Garibaldi tradition. Malraux succeeded because he was powerfully impelled by his own quite exceptional nature to act, and then to write with conviction. Others failed, not because they did not act, but because they refused to recognise that they were unfitted for action. If they had renounced half-hearted action they might at least have written hard from the depths of their conviction of what was happening. This conviction preceded the wish to act: that means it must have come out of an experience which was already there, long before "we" joined any political party. In that case, might it not have been better to have devoted energy to recreating that experience, instead of wasting it sitting on committees?

After all, "we" knew what was happening: Why go to Spain to prove it, unless one really was qualified to act there? Why have to seek the corroboration of the moral support of one small politically conscious section of the working classes before "we" dared put what we knew down on paper? The fact is, we lacked confidence in our own humanity. We did not believe even that we really lived until we had it proved to us by someone else. We thought that we were isolated; but if we had accepted that isolation, it might have been a shaft leading deep down into the sources of a common humanity including all classes and all countries.

Let those whose experiences must be hammered into them by violence, act by all means. But let others put trust in their own experience, however small and restricted it seems. If it is true, its implications are bound to be terrific. What's the use of going to half a dozen capitals in Europe and America just to learn something that their genius told all writers of the past wherever they were, whether they never left home, or whether chance drove them all over the earth?

Moreover, if you are going to act, action, for a writer, must be real and not theoretical, however profound the theoretical change of heart. If you feel impelled to join the working class, then join them by all means; don't just join the Party Cell and think that that is the working class, because it isn't. A politician can afford to use just his mind, but a writer must always use his whole being. On the other hand, if you are not a man of action, then for God's sake write, and don't pretend to despise "technical virtuosity": that means Auden, I suppose, and reads like envy. If a future generation condemns us, I think it will be because we lacked sufficient faith in ourselves to take our own work seriously.

STEPHEN SPENDER

BOMBED

THE telegram ran: *Residence bombed advise you to come.* So of course I went.

The end of the road was blocked, and over opposite was a notice DANGER: UNEXPLODED BOMB. But people were passing and repassing; and, leaving the taxi, I got out and walked on. Round the corner I should see! With a curious, slightly sick feeling I went to the corner and looked round. Round the corner wasn't there. It had just disappeared. Instead, there was a great gap in the row of houses, as if (I foolishly said to myself) it had lost a tooth.

Here was a view I had never seen in all those twenty-seven years during which I had walked up to that corner; a view of the backs of other houses, which had now a clear prospect of the river. I had not been prepared to find my home had *gone*, gone altogether.

One hardly noticed the grim heap of debris where the building had been; a heap, it surprised me to see, to a great extent formed, apparently, of earth. I said to one of the demolition men, "That earth, is it from some bomb-crater?" "No, sir," he told me, "that's the building." Earth! It had turned to earth.

I looked stupidly round. I looked vaguely up. And there, hanging above me in mid-air, I saw something I recognised.

A picture hanging on a wall, four storeys above. Even at that distance I recognised the picture. It was mine—one of Walter Greaves' engravings of Old Chelsea. And the wall was the wall of my flat. And there was my bath, projecting over the abyss.

But—I tried to adjust myself—it all looked so odd. Where was the rest? The door? The stairs?

It took a moment or so to realise that the flat had been sliced sideways; the east part had gone—with the landing and the stairs—and half my kitchen-dining-bathroom was left. And—*and*—the inner room! With my bookcases and bed. And my piano!

There was no glass left in any of the windows; the end of the flat stood open to the sky, like a doll's-house with the front removed; but almost certainly most of the furniture inside must be, if not intact, at all events existent.

I looked vacantly over the shapeless mound on which I was standing. A draggled envelope met my eye. I stooped and looked closer:

Eliot Crawshay-Williams, Esq. In a writing now almost forgotten. I took up the envelope and dejectedly threw it down again.

There were still five bodies under that mass of bricks and earth and human possessions. The demolition gang were trying to get them out; though, of course, no hope remained that any living thing lay buried there. The foreman of the gang came up. I found it difficult to talk at first. Apart from other things, I felt a curious sort of shyness, seeing bits and scraps of my things lying there. Almost as if I myself were indecently exposed.

He was a genial soul, with a pungent sense of humour.

"Gets some surprises, we do, in this 'ere business," he told me, cheerfully. "I was diggin' for a little boy an' girl the other day, an' I come across an old chap of eighty."

He let me go up the somewhat tottering staircase of the next block of flats (evacuated), and over the roof right to the place where that roof abruptly ended. I had thought I might drop down on to the window-sill of my flat, get in through the smashed window, and see what things looked like inside. I had done it before, when I'd locked myself out, I explained.

"It's at yer own risk," he said, "an' it's nothing ter me what becomes of yer. But don't yer go comin' down on the 'eads of any of my chaps 'ere."

But when I got up I found I just couldn't do it; even if I could have got down, I could never have got back. And it was all pretty shaky.

Down at the bottom again, I found my friend had dragged out of the mess a cardboard target registering one or two shots, none of them very near to the bull.

"Not much of a shot, was you?" he remarked, holding the target in front of him and looking at it scornfully.

Suddenly, I remembered—dimly, yet with conviction—what it was.

"I didn't fire those shots," I said. "They were fired by the girl I was going to marry at Earl's Court Exhibition, nearly forty years ago. You remember Earl's Court Exhibition?"

"Don't I!" he said, with a dry smile. "'Savage South Africa!' They was run in over that in the end. An' that was a good bit ago; when these young chaps," turning to the, considerably less mature, rest of the gang, "was in a fluid state."

"Or a twinkle in their fathers' eye," was my more modest suggestion.

He smiled approval, and pulled a hat-box out of the general chaos.

"This yours?"

It was. I opened it. An old top hat—undamaged—and a Gunner cap from the last war.

"You can have 'em," I said.

"No, guvnor," he remonstrated. "Keep the army 'at—fer luck."

"All right," I said, and took it out.

Then, asking him to do his best for me, I turned to go.

"Well, guvnor," were his parting words, "you've 'ad a damn good spring clean, anyway."

ELIOT CRAWSHAY-WILLIAMS

THE RETURN

ALL the lost interpretations,
All the unconsummated consummations,
All the birds that flew and left the big sky empty
Come back throwing shadows on our patience.

Bethlehem is desolate and the stables
Cobwebbed, mute; below each Tower of Babel's
Sentrydom of night, inside the bleak
Glass of cafés chairs are piled on tables.

Notwithstanding which, notwithstanding
The hospital—the icicles round the landing—
Expecting Birth, we know that it will come
Sooner or later, banding

Together the good daemons, the defiance
And lolloping vulcanite of sea-lions,
The harlequinade of water through a sluice,
Tigers in the air, and in the teeth of science

The acclamation of earth's returning daughter,
Jonquils out of hell, and after
Hell the imperative of joy, the dancing
Fusillade of sunlight on the water.

LOUIS MACNEICE

THE MOVIES

"Arise, My Love," at the Carlton
"The Man I Married," at the New Gallery
"The Road to 'Frisco," at Warners
"Third Finger, Left Hand," at the Empire

All four are stock films, spruce, shiny, well-starred, made in Hollywood, as once the best toys were made in Germany. Here the director doesn't count, but the stars do; *Arise, My Love* is very good Colbert, *Third Finger, Left Hand* is shop-soiled Myrna Loy. But even more important than stars is the type of story, the material, departmentalised like a Ministry of Information bulletin. All that need be said of *The Road to 'Frisco* is that it begins with the long, long road with a white line down the middle (George Raft and Humphrey Bogart as truck-drivers), and falling asleep at the wheel and barmaid-gazing at a road café (Ann Sheridan), and after a couple of crashes moves on to the boss's murder by his wife (Ida Lupino), who hopes to clear the way for Raft. She miscalculates—Raft already having his Sheridan—and goes, very convincingly, mad. There have been better films about night-driving and about murdering and going mad, but *The Road to 'Frisco* gives us an exciting length of each. *Third Finger, Left Hand* is far less competent of its kind; it is, in fact, a feeble echo of *Hired Wife*, proving this time that a woman needs "protection" in business and that phoney marriages open the road to final happiness. Single beds and arguments about compatibility need more wit than is provided here. Myrna Loy is not very striking as Myrna Loy.

Arise, My Love and *The Man I Married* are stories of Americans in pre-war Nazi Europe, a zone which will very soon be as well-mapped as gangsterdom or the divorce-court jungle. However, this kind of adventure is not yet stereotyped, and both these films enjoy being at times on their own. *The Man I Married* has several good surprises. One is the family tableau, with everyone, including the servants, assembled in the drawing-room to hear Herr Göebbels on the wireless. Another is the moment when a fanatical Party member learns that his grandmother was a Jewess. Being married to a man (German-American) who can be floored by such a discovery provides both drama, and, in the end, ironic relief; the wife escapes from this zoo, where the only human beings are behind bars, and returns to America. Francis Lederer as the Nazi convert, and Joan Bennett as the wife, make the clash credible; and the one has a Rhinemaiden (Anna Sten) to fall back on, and the other a sympathetic American journalist (Lloyd Nolan). Otherwise the film makes the discoveries we might expect: goose-stepping boots on the cobbles, a spying man-servant, Maria Ouspenskaya as a tragic widow, the old German world being bludgeoned by the new, a voodoo Party meeting with drum-rolls and revivalist "Heils."

Arise, My Love takes Europe in its stride, and rumours of war, followed by the sinking of the *Athenia* and the German entry into Paris, form the natural background of a love-story in the Hemingway tradition. How much better equipped that tradition is to link important events to personal destinies can be judged by comparing it with the same tradition in English: romance-reporting in the Philip Gibbs' style. Americans start with the advantage of not being obliged to laugh at everything foreign. The lovers in *Arise, My Love* are an airman who joins up with the war in Spain, and a newspaper-woman who saves him from the firing-squad in order to make a front-page story of him. He has to pose for photographs, reels off pages of his life-story while she taps her own version on the typewriter. But the "scoop" insists on coming to life; he sits in a Paris café looking up at her window; he rings up hopefully at night, having on a previous occasion had his nose bitten. She meanwhile, tapping away for a front page, has locked her door and transferred her shoes to the hotel cloak-room to resist the temptation of going out. The parts are charmingly and vivaciously played by Ray Milland and Claudette Colbert; one of the film's triumphs is that it gets quite a lot of lovers' cross-talk past the censor. The affair goes on, they have a three days' honeymoon on the eve of Poland, one scoop follows another, she covers the armistice-signing at Compiègne, he breaks an arm crashing in Norway, and in the end—each with a story to tell—they sail together for America. Realism, relish of the picaresque and a certain playfulness about human relations in an erupting world give this film its touch of authenticity. A few months ago the same film might have felt the need of being tremendous about big events; in three months' time the theme will have been worn smooth. *Arise, My Love* comes just right—neither too green, nor over-ripe. One thing about the Hollywood machine is that from time to time its parts work together and it turns out the goods.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Strike Up the Music," at the Coliseum

This musical production is lavishly pre-war. It is built round a series of those grandiose spectacles for which Parisian revues were once famous in England; and, for England and wartime England at that, it achieves a surprisingly good imitation of its model. The scenes are three times as large as life and twice as unnatural: the show girls are barely but gorgeously displayed in costumes and colours from every period and from none: the spangles glitter and the fountains play in mauve and crimson light, and the stage revolves to display bigger and better scenes with more and more girl to be seen in each of them. In short, we would not be surprised at any moment to see Mistinguett handed down over the heads of the Gentlemen of the Chorus and land before us in a halo of ostrich feathers—only, a call-up has abstracted the Gentlemen of the Chorus. Still, there's a cellophane Castle of Glass to complete the Chocolate Box Louis XVI "Land of Memories," and the freer manners of the present-day revue stage give us a generous ration of the female form profane, and M. André Randall is genuinely French. In between these glittering confections Douglas Byng, suspended on a Peter Pan wire, flutters across the stage as Doris Goddess of Wind or marches briskly to and fro as a Lady General; Gaston Palmer juggles with a deceptive incompetence, and so on. But if you like this kind of thing, it is done here in the grand manner.

"The Marriage of Figaro," at the New Theatre

During their two-weeks' season of opera at the New Theatre, the Sadlers Wells company are giving performances of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Traviata*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Fledermaus* and *The Beggar's Opera*. The last, one gathers, will be after Hogarth rather than Cruikshank or Playfair, and it has been refitted with a prologue addressed to modern audiences. Gay's dialogue will be refreshing after the makeshifts of English-spoken opera. Even Professor Dent's translation of Da Ponte introduces an occasional stiffness or familiarity into the ease of *Figaro*. The opening performance of *Figaro* last Monday was an admirable achievement in reduced circumstances. There have had to be cuts all round: the opera itself has been squeezed to fit into short afternoons; orchestra is a little thin, action on the stage confined to a small area artfully enlarged by two painted screens with doors. But the voices are there: Joan Cross gives a splendid performance as the Countess, and Sumner Austin as the Count, and Janet Hamilton-Smith in the part of Susanna, sang and acted with spirit. Figaro himself (John Hargreaves) was not quite the dominating figure he might be, too dulcet and prone to easy smiles, though his voice was not at fault. The producer, Tyrone Guthrie, has aimed successfully at simplicity, and no opera-lover need be deterred from going by the idea that he will have to make allowances.

The Redfern Gallery

Cecil Michaelis has a pretty sense of colour. But a sense of colour is not enough. What comes to him through the eyes is very much what comes to anyone of taste who has looked intelligently at modern painting. What he needs most is personal vision, or, if you like, something to say. If he can dig deeper into visual experience, he will still have to discover a means of expression. It is then that his taste in colour will become valuable. A young South African, living in France, he might have become, had things gone normally, an undistinguished member of the school of Paris, with its small profits and distressingly quick returns, or of the school of Cassis even. As it is, he has been driven to a country where ready-made modern pictures are not to be seen from every window, and where he will learn no patent substitute for composition. If he has the stuff of an artist in him, this will be all to the good. His next exhibition should then be well worth seeing.

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, February 22nd—
- Dramatic Production, including *Deirdre*, by W. B. Yeats, by students of the Mary Ward Settlement, Tavistock Little Theatre, 2.30.
- Circle of International Art Concert, 151 Finchley Road, N.W.3, 3.
- "Convention." Concert, Conway Hall, 2.30. And Sunday, February 23rd.

SUNDAY, February 23rd—
- Prof. G. E. Catlin: "The New Philosophy and the New Order—the Meaning for the Individual," Conway Hall, 11.
- Free German League of Culture Concert of Modern Chamber Music, 36 Upper Park Road, N.W.3, 3.
- Fabian Conference: "Plan Production Now," Cora Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, W.C.1, 10.45. Tickets 5s.
- K. B. Smellie: "Social Philosophy—Medieval," I.S.T.D., 17 Manchester Street, W.1, 11.

MONDAY, February 24th—
- Society of Women Journalists Lunch-time Meeting. Speaker: J. B. Priestley. Miss Marjorie Bowen in the Chair. Stock Room, Stationer's Hall, 1.30.

TUESDAY, February 25th—
- Mrs. Joan Woollcombe: "Holidays for Civil Defence Workers," Housing Centre, 13 Suffolk Street, S.W.1, 1.
- Charles L. Morgan: "France is an Idea Necessary to Civilisation," Royal Institution, 2.30.

WEDNESDAY, February 26th—
- Fabian Women's Lunch, Dorothy Elliott: "The Organisation of Women in Trade Unions," 12 Great Newport Street, W.C.2, 1.
- Sigismond Jarecki: "Une Heure de Musique Francaise Contemporaine," Institut Francais, 3.

FRIDAY, February 28th—
- C. E. M. Joad: "Some Problems of Philosophy," Birkbeck College, 1.15.

Correspondence

FUTURE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

SIR,—The discussion on the future of the Labour Party, which is going on in your paper, is of decisive historic importance and it should continue for the duration, for the fate of the Labour Movement is the fate of civilisation, and the responsibility for the future of mankind exclusively rests with Socialism. As a foreigner who is not familiar with the inside life of the British Labour Party, I naturally do not want to discuss problems of the Party itself, but I should like to point to some experiences I had with the two strongest Continental Labour organisations the German and the Austrian Social-Democratic parties. I lived, as an editor and foreign correspondent of democratic newspapers which were closely associated with the Labour Movement, in Berlin from 1928 to 1933, and in Vienna from 1933 until the Nazis came and took me to Dachau. So I had the opportunity of observing just the decisive struggle between Democracy and Fascism, and the dying of what had once been vigorous and apparently undefeatable popular movements.

In my opinion, the two German Socialist parties simply died from lack of Socialism. Neither had even tried to perform a single point of their programme, in so far as Socialism is concerned. Their Trade Unions were very efficient, and recorded great achievements. But the problems of wages, unemployment assistance, old age pensions and health insurance, important though they are, have nothing to do with Socialism, the aim of which is not the improvement of working-class conditions under capitalist regime but the transformation of society in a completely new system of production and distribution of wealth. In Germany and Austria, Trade Unions had become a substitute, an *ersatz* to Socialism, and eventually an essential part of the capitalist mechanism. Both the German and the Austrian Socialists had, during a period of many years after the Great War, sufficient power to start Socialising. Instead, the German Party associated itself with the old Prussian generals against those who, in 1918 and 1919, made an attempt to call into being Socialist Germany, and afterwards the Party did their best to save capitalism at the expense of the working people, in freely subsidising the bankrupt agrarians, industrialists and banks. In Austria, the Socialists simply deserted, handing over the power to the so-called Christian Socialists, the Party of Big Business and the well-to-do middle class. In Vienna, the Socialist City Council and Corporation greatly improved the dwelling conditions of the working class and created excellent welfare institutions, all at the expense of the rich—but again, taxation cannot replace Socialism.

It would require an entire book to investigate the causes of this attitude of the German and Austrian Socialists. Here I can only state the fact that those Socialists did absolutely nothing to produce anything like Socialism, and I do not think that this statement can be disputed. Now, it is quite natural that parties must perish if they are afraid of their own programme, and that was the case with those German Socialists. It is a singular phenomenon, and it has led to what happened in Germany. In spite of the services Socialism rendered it, Capitalism disintegrated, and it was an interesting feature of those years that with the increasing disintegration of Capitalism, the Labour Movement also became weaker from day to day. Labour was like a plant, the fertile soil of which was drying. It became evident that the German Labour Movement was quite an ordinary part of the Capitalist State, like any of the bourgeois parties.

In principle, the Socialists were right in saying that Socialism was the alternative to Capitalism. But it has to be *performed and organised*. The whole Socialist idea is based on planning and organising, and being just the contrary—the alternative—to Capitalism, Socialism cannot simply carry on, so to speak, in the abandoned offices of Capitalism. The breakdown of Capitalism will not automatically result in Socialism. With their old basis vanishing, State and Society become a no-man's-land. Hitler had only to step in to become the real "alternative."

17 St. Andrew's Road, BRUNO HEILIG
London, N.W.11.

SIR,—While the Secretary of the Labour Party has taken care, in the letter you published, not to deny my statements, he has so worded his confirmation that the facts, which were clear, become confused. It was never suggested by me that the 1939 Balance Sheet was anything but "plain, accurate and straightforward": I merely described as "a shrewd device" the act of adding the monies received from local Parties during the first three months of 1940 to those received during the twelve months of 1939 and calling them "Receipts for year ending December 31st, 1939." Mr. Middleton cannot—in fact, he does not—deny what is printed on page 58 of the Bournemouth Conference Report.

He does, however, introduce very vividly the question of "decreases in individual membership and increases in Trade Union affiliations," and as my whole article was tuned to that—the increasing numerical and financial power of the Trade Unions within the Labour Party—he must not object if I publicly welcome the proofs he produces that the situation I stated existed. The figures to which he refers your readers (on page 45 of the Bournemouth Report) show that during the last five recorded years the total membership of 636 local Parties declined by 10,465, while the number of trade unionists who subscribed to the Labour Party through 72 Trade Unions increased by 301,146.

Those figures of Mr. Middleton's support my contention that the Trade Unions are strengthening, while the local Parties are loosening, their numerical grip on the Labour Party. If the affiliation fees of those 72 Trade Unions to the Labour Party (page 94) are compared with the fees of the local Parties (page 99) the financial superiority of the former is also revealed.

In the twelve months ending December 31st, 1939, the fees of the 408,844 individual members

only provided the Labour Party with a total of £5,229 16s. 6d., which is an average of £8 4s. 3d. per local Party per year. The 72 Trade Unions paid in £41,393 5s. 7d., which is an average of £565 3s. 7d. per Union—and most of these trade unionists who paid through their Unions paid a second time as individual members of the 636 local Parties.

That numerical and financial superiority of the Trade Unions over the local Parties in the Labour Party was my whole and only case. That such superiority can manifest itself along routes that diametrically traverse the line that most of the local Parties take, no delegate or visitor to Annual Conferences of the Labour Party can have failed to perceive.

I contend that the Trade Unions will not, after a war that has given them a more adequate assessment of their power than they have ever had before, be content to provide the finance and the numbers—they will demand greater control of the Labour Party both on the N.E.C. and in the local Parties. Holding the view that the more the working class is organised industrially the greater its power will be, I welcome that prospect. It is of wide, fundamental importance and should not be confused by Mr. Middleton's observation that "Mr. Allighan may not like the Election Truce."

In my original article I studiously refrained from stating whether I "liked" the Truce or not, because what I "like" is of no importance and certainly of no interest to your readers. I tried to show one of the *effects* of the Truce—not a bad one, either, because it will give "the plain Union man" and his wife a much bigger place in the Labour Party than, as Mr. Middleton infers, has been the case in the past, when "doctrinaire Socialists" and the merely vociferous Leftists have succeeded by their doctrinal squabbling or partisan theorising in either boring or disgusting the "practical Socialist" of the Trade Unions into absenteeism. GARRY ALLIGHAN

SIR,—A complete re-orientation of politics after the war is inevitable, and it would be good if Mr. Allighan's prediction—that the Labour Party becomes a definitely proletarian body—came true. Unless it does, the Labour Party must, of necessity, be indistinguishable from the Conservatives who have been highly Liberalised by the war. There is no future for the Labour Party along pre-war lines of Party demarcation, because the Tories, to save themselves in the war, have stolen much of Labour Party thunder—and must continue so to save themselves after the war. The only future for the Labour Party depends on its ability, or willingness, to sharply re-define itself as a labour party—the political instrument of those who labour, the majority of whom are proletarian and all of whom should be trade unionists. Political parties in the future will be grouped on an economic basis: producers and consumers in one camp, employers and entrepreneurs in the opposite. The present Labour Party would be bifurcated between both—and disintegrate for that reason. E. P. S. L.

BOURGEOIS ETHICS

SIR,—For the record rather than for the benefit of your correspondent, I should like to say:

(1) That I still believe that "the assumption by the working class of such power that the capitalists cannot prevent the abolition of capitalism and the introduction of Socialism" is "the very link-pin or corner-stone of scientific Socialist theory."

(2) That I still believe that Socialism can be defined as a system "in which consumers' goods but not means of production pass into private hands."

I am glad to be reminded that I coined this useful little definition. What I wrote in *A Faith to Fight For* was that the point, or end and objectives of thus establishing such a system was to make possible the limitless development of those values which I symbolised by the words truth and love. For what is the object of the revolt of the workers against insecurity, hunger, war and exploitation unless it is to remake the world both materially and morally? The fact is that these people have become moral morons, genuinely unable to make the very simplest distinctions between good and evil.

39 St. Leonard's Terrace, JOHN STRACHEY
Chelsea, S.W.3.

FREE SPEECH IN CAMBRIDGE

SIR,—In your issue of February 1st, Critic refers to the Proctors of Cambridge University and their action in refusing to give written permission for a meeting to be addressed by Mr. Pritt. Your readers might be interested to know the full facts of the case.

This refusal alone did not ban the meeting; and the Proctors have in fact no power to do so, at present. The owners of the hall, however, insist on such permission, and after a telephone conversation with a Proctor on the day of the meeting they decided to cancel their undertaking to let their premises.

This follows the suggestion of the Proctors last year that it would be in "good taste" for the Union Society to discontinue, for the duration of the war, the debates for which the Society is famous; and the refusal of the Proctors last term to give written permission for a meeting to be addressed by Krishna Menon, Secretary of the India League, on the imprisonment of Nehru.

The Cambridge University Undergraduate Council, to which practically every undergraduate society is affiliated, unanimously decided to hold a meeting in Cambridge Guildhall on "Freedom of Speech in the University." Officials of the Undergraduate Council, the Union Society and the Conservative, Labour, Liberal and Socialist Clubs spoke in turn from the platform, and representatives of all shades of opinion addressed the meeting from the floor. Proceedings were subject to organised and continuous interruption from "groups of young athletes with more energy than understanding" (in the words of Critic); but at the end a resolution was passed by 459 to 158 asking that "Cambridge students should have equality before the law with other citizens" and appealing to the authorities to "use their powers to check rioting rather than to prevent meetings."

On the following day (January 28th) the Proctorial Syndicate, ignoring this resolution, recommended that "during the period of the present emergency" every club wishing to hold a public meeting should be compelled to obtain permission from the Junior Proctor and give at least six days' notice of such a meeting. In a preamble to this request for the power to ban meetings the Proctorial Syndicate advances the following reasons: "In the interests of public peace and to lessen the risk of members of the University becoming involved in breaches of the law."

This recommendation has yet to be ratified by the University Senate. Senior members of the University will thus be given an opportunity of demonstrating their concern for the University's traditions of free speech. MARTIN LYTH,

Clare College, President, Undergraduate
Cambridge. Council.

SITWELLISMUS

SIR,—May I suggest an old alternative to Mr. Stephen Spender's plan for libellers and libellees to call quits? It is the plan adopted by "Corno di Bassetto" in his musical criticism. Pursuing his calling (as he once wrote) by sufferance—by a sort of informal Geneva convention, which put actions-at-law in the same category with explosive bullets, di Bassetto went on to say that:

> when a combatant shows the least disposition to violate this convention, I prudently avoid him altogether. At the same time, I do not object to retorts in kind. The one manager with whom I feel on perfectly easy terms runs a paper of his own; and whenever I libel his enterprises in this column to the tune of £500 damages, he does not meanly take an action against me, but promptly fires off a round thousand worth of libels on me in his own paper. I appreciate his confidence as he appreciates mine; and we write reciprocally with complete freedom, whereas, if we suspected any possibility of litigiousness, we should never dare allude to one another.

I might add, what everyone knows, that if Corno di Bassetto, or his successor, Mr. Bernard Shaw, had been as touchy about his literary reputation as the Sitwells, a good deal of lively but libellous scurrility would have been fought out in the courts, and Mr. Shaw's detractors would have been compelled to shut their mouths before he became a millionaire at their expense.

Lyndale, ALLAN M. LAING
19 Wavertree Nook Road,
Liverpool, 15.

LOOTING AND PRISON

SIR,—The outbreak of war and the widespread destruction of houses and shops which was sooner or later inevitable, made that special wartime crime of looting also inevitable. Parliament foresaw this, and in its legislation providing penalties for looting, it implied its recognition of the fact that in the stress, confusion and temptation of the moment, many normally law-abiding citizens, as well as some of the minority of bad characters, would become guilty of what is rightly deemed a menacing crime.

The recent lull in air raids on big cities may enable us to consider the question of penalties dispassionately. No one denies the importance of reducing looting to a minimum, or the reasonableness of awarding heavier penalties to those who abuse positions of responsibility and loot premises they are set to guard.

The disquieting features of the situation are: (1) the assumption, apparently common among magistrates, that looting, even by youths and men of previous good character, must be punished by imprisonment to mark the gravity of the offence and to serve as a deterrent; (2) the existence in the higher courts of power to pass sentence of death for looting and the threat, sometimes uttered by magistrates, of the capital penalty in the background.

It seems desirable to recall the unvarying history of crime and punishment since Parliament began to mitigate the savage penal laws of the nineteenth century which relied first on the threat of hanging, and later on long terms of imprisonment to stamp out crime. The lesson of that history is that harsh punishments utterly fail to prevent crime, that they harm the society which inflicts them as well as the citizen who suffers them. One great lesson of penal reform in the twentieth century is the importance of wise, sympathetic and firm constructive handling of each individual young offender and novice in crime. Magistrates can do nothing but harm by indiscriminate shovelling of looters into prison simply because we are afraid of looting.

The prisons of 1938 did less harm to the inmates than the prisons of 1918 because of the reforms of the last twenty years, the work of voluntary teachers and unofficial visitors. To-day, as a result of war conditions and of the black-out, and the preoccupation of workers with war service, prison conditions have deteriorated and much of the ground gained since 1918 has temporarily been lost. Now, more than ever, it is a sin against the community and the individual to send to prison those who, despite their crime, are potentially good citizens.

The Howard League for Penal Reform. CICELY M. CRAVEN, Honorary Secretary.

ADULT EDUCATION

SIR,—As I said before, there is nothing to be gained by public controversy about facts, but since Mr. Lowth raises a point of principle, let me point out that agreement with his doctrine that the Adult Education "service is for students" is very far from committing one to acquiescence in the view (which Mr. Lowth apparently accepts by implication) that the war is an adequate justification for picking the Tutor's pocket to the tune of £20 a year—the Tutor, you will remember, is represented by Mr. Lowth as getting £60 for doing the work which he formerly did for £80. The labourer, surely, is worthy of his hire, and if he is worth £80 in peacetime I am blest if I can see why he should be worth only £60 in war. Mr. Lowth's reminder that the Tutor's alternative to accepting this reduction is to get nothing at all, that is, presumably, for those who are dependent for their livelihood on the fees received from Adult Educational classes to go destitute, does not mend matters. It only means that people can be blackmailed by poverty into doing work at cut rates. One knew that already.

C. E. M. JOAD

STATE MEDICAL SERVICE

SIR,—May I beg for leave to reply shortly to some of the statements contained in the letters of Dr. Somerville Hastings and Mr. Ritchie Calder on this subject?

Both gentlemen seem to think that I have some animus against Municipal Hospitals. This is certainly not the case. In fact, I have a great admiration for them and the work they have accomplished, during the last few years, in carrying on the medical services formerly given under such deplorable conditions by the old Poor Law system. But I hold the view strongly that there is and should be no competition between the Municipal Hospitals and the Voluntary Hospitals, and there is ample room for both. I am sorry if Dr. Somerville Hastings thinks I have overstated the case for the Voluntary Hospitals. Such was certainly not my intention, but having had long and intimate knowledge of

their administration, and the work they have done and are doing, I am naturally concerned with their position and future.

I do not admit, as suggested by Mr. Calder, that their financial and administrative structure is unstable. Unfortunately, their financial difficulties are considerable, but not such as could not be surmounted if reasonable and proper help by the public and State were forthcoming. This is, in fact, my reply to Mr. Calder's query. I consider that the Voluntary Hospitals by their great work and record are entitled to the help of the public (not by "charity" as quoted by Mr. Calder, although I always think this term is misapplied and misunderstood), but also by Government help that is freely given for such public services as Education, Housing, Pensions, etc., with, I imagine, the warm and enthusiastic support of all.

I appreciate that any State help to the Voluntary Hospitals may involve a certain amount of State control, but this I would welcome, particularly if it is of the kind now given by the Ministry of Health under the E.M.S., which, despite Mr. Calder's views, I still maintain is functioning admirably.

Fir Crest, Westcott, nr. Dorking. HERBERT S. SYRETT, Chairman of the National Temperance Hospital

SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

SIR,—May I butt in on the *Daily Worker* and *Week* controversy? Apart from possible but improbable compromises, three alternatives face us at the end of the war: (*a*) victory for the Nazi Party, (*b*) victory for the Anglo-American industrialists, (*c*) a European revolution by the common people and men of good will.

In my view the *Daily Worker*, in its rather muddle-headed way, has consistently supported (*c*). Its timing has often been bad and its phrasing tendentious, but it has been more *consistent* than "liberal" journals, who now support a form of supra-nationalism after having, for years, advocated social revolution and the surrender of national sovereignty. Even such things as the incredible Margesson appointment and Peter Bennett's accession to the Commons have been barely criticised.

Now the alternative (*a*), above, may be "worse than death," but do you, Sir, really believe that (*b*) will be anything more than dust and ashes—the *status quo ante*, with all the controls tightened up? The only hope lies in (*c*)—the annihilation of Power politics and exploitation. Thus, in their hopeless gesture of an appeal to the peoples of Europe, over their rulers' heads, the People's Convention was perfectly sound. Unfortunately, there is only one man who would stand even a remote chance of leading such a movement in this country—and he has been carefully kept out of the way, in Delhi and Moscow, almost from the hour war was declared.

Now with regard to the *Week*, various people dislike it for various reasons. The main point, however, is that it was correct in its analysis of events, when the *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Express* and *Action* were all hopelessly wrong. To a simple mind that would appear to be the very best of reasons for non-suppression. That it is not sufficient shows, first, that it is the men who were wrong who have done the suppressing, and, second, that they intend that victory shall be *theirs*, not *ours*, that their wrongness may be perpetuated. Let us, for God's sake, remember that though Hitler's crimes may make good propaganda to-day, when shelter morale must be kept up, that those crimes were concealed, condoned, minimised, denied, by the ruling classes of Britain, until Hitler committed the last and unforgivable crime of threatening the ruling classes of Britain. You can lie, you can torture, you can bomb the people of Spain and destroy the democracy of Czechoslovakia—but threaten Threadneedle Street or Wall Street and then, indeed, the dogs of war must be unleashed.

No, Sir, it just won't wash—and you know it as well as anyone. The peoples of Europe are in the grip of colossal historic forces for which very complex combinations of men and powers are responsible. Only the peoples can save themselves now—and there are no ballot boxes left to do it with. Tragically, therefore, all three of our alternatives involve blood and tears . . . but the third, at least, gives hope, too.

Fortunately, revolutions are spontaneous affairs which are not born in Fleet Street. The suppression of a couple of small journals will not divert the course of history. It is events which will decide the hour.

38 Gurney Drive, N.2. ROBERT FURNEAUX

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

In the portrayal of character for its own sake and of the sociable rather than the social man, the English novelists have always excelled. The social man, the creature of ideas who must sacrifice some of his idiosyncrasy to environment, movements or theories, appears in a few exceptional books such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Gulliver*, *Jonathan Wild* and later on in *Hard Times* and *The Way of All Flesh*. Elsewhere he is to be found mostly in the background. There is emotion about society (Dickens), but there is repugnance to ideas about it. It is remarkable how little the English novel was influenced in the 19th century by the political and scientific thought of the time. Vainly we look, for example, for any sign that Darwin had been read, at any rate with an eye to the reconsideration of society. Thomas Hardy merely changes the pronoun by which one usually addresses the Deity; and at the turn of the century, Arnold Bennett performs a typical feat in importing the methods of the French naturalists, but leaves out the whole philosophical and political impulse behind that movement. This repugnance is supposed to have changed now. Yet so blankly does the alternative of sociability and society present itself to the English novelist that Wells thought he had to abandon character altogether and so lost his quality as a novelist. Since then there has been a good deal of talk about Marx and social realism which may be fruitful but which so far has produced next to nothing in the novel. Why, I am not sure; perhaps because we left learning about the nineteenth century too late.

How late may be seen by reading Zola's *Germinal*.* It was published in 1885. I do not know whether Zola ever read Marx, though I believe that at this time he certainly had not—but he had heard of the First International; he knew the doctrines of Anarchism and its personalities; he had read Darwin. He was familiar with the idea of the struggle for life and the struggle of the classes, contests so congenial to his dramatic temperament. He saw not indeed the grey trudge of economic man, but, more picturesquely and not a little mystically—mouths. Mouths wide open, groups of mouths, kinds of mouths; the vision became, for his curiously divided personality, an orgy of gluttony both gross and idealised. ("Seed" and "gluttony" are the recurring key words of *Germinal*.) Where is the English parallel to the vision of *Germinal*? There is none. Our religious conscience was certainly troubled, our social conscience not at all. The fittest, the English middle classes and their novelists seem to have assumed, had survived.

And, to be more particular, we not only had Darwin but we had the mines. Where still is the English *Germinal*? Certainly in the last twenty years there have been English novels about the coal mines, novels concerned with the social question. There have even been talent, experience, feeling. What has been lacking? Genius, except in the abortive case of D. H. Lawrence, of course; but above all a philosophy of life which could feed the kind of genius this novel calls for. Zola dug out of 19th century speculation a theatrical but also profound view of mankind. He had temperament, will and curiosity. And he had the chronic ability to write novels on a variety of very different subjects. All these qualities the English mining novelists lack.

Comparing their books with *Germinal* one sees at once that they suffer also from a fatal moral simplicity. There is the choke of the hard luck story in their throats. And from their chief fallacy Zola is entirely free: the fallacy that people who are starved, poor and oppressed are good and noble because they are poor and oppressed. And he is also free of the rider to the fallacy: that their sufferings and struggles make them more virtuous. Zola's drawing undoubtedly exaggerated—temperament *is* exaggeration—and in the way in which his period tended to exaggerate. His inverted idealism idealised the monstrous. But his 19th century preoccupation with corruption and nightmare did show him that poverty may lead to degradation, that souls may become exhausted, that the moral victories of poverty may be at the cost of humanity itself. This was not indeed Zola's final judgment. He appears in *Germinal* to back the *bête humaine*, to admire the brute mob because it is brutal or rather because he sees in it a force of nature overthrowing on Darwinian lines the weaklier types and eventually transcending them. The miners are the seed sown in the horror of the dark earth and will one day germinate and rise through the mud to free themselves and the world. So there are positive and negative poles to Zola's philosophy. In the English novels on the subject there is no similar organic conception of the nature of men. They are not tragic figures because they are never struggling with themselves. What miner in an English novel ever misbehaved, unless he was a blackleg or a labelled villain? True he may drink or fight a bit, but that is merely toughness. He never has evil in his nature. Zola's central character and hero bashes a man's brains out and that because of an hereditary poison on his soul. One smiles at Zola's pedantic little fuss about hereditary, but the case shows the difference between the pieties of the political Sunday School and imaginative literature.

The two great things in the main outline of *Germinal* are its romantic grasp of the scene—the sustained symbolism—and the handling of groups of people. The mine appears to Etienne, the worker, as he approaches it at night through the freezing gale, first of all as two points of yellow light like the eyes of a night animal; then its dragon-like form takes shape, the gasp of steam from its engine is like a monster's breathing. The monster squats on the plain; the cages whirr down full of men, up comes the coal; the mine is a monster devouring men, excreting coal. That sombre opening chapter is unforgettable. One is overpowered and frightened. What a relief to meet the sardonic old nightwatchman, Bonnemort, the first character, the old man whom the mine cannot kill; and then how brilliant of Zola, a master of the strategy of story-telling, to show us that the relief we found in Bonnemort is deceptive. He is no sunny face to charm the visitor with; he is—the malice of the mine itself, the shrewd grin that remains on life when it is maimed. There are the gluttony of that animal the mine, the gluttony of those animals the Hennebeaus, the owning family with their terrible, overfed daughter—against the gluttony of the miners, a very different kind: the rabid gluttony of the starved. Zola's poetic symbolism no doubt gets out of hand at times, especially later on when the shouting mouths of the rioters are caught by the red light of the setting sun and seem to be blotched with guzzled blood. That is a bad moment when the fresco becomes as false as a poster; but, in general, the romanticism of Zola transfigures the enormous dossier which he collected. At the end, in that terrifying chapter where the underground landslides make the mine cave in so that the monster which has devoured so many is itself devoured, the preposterous symbolism comes off because Zola has prepared the way with extraordinary technical thoroughness. The engine goes:

> And then a terrible thing was seen; the engine, dislocated from its massive foundation, with broken limbs was struggling against death; it moved; it straightened its crank, its giant's knee, as though to rise: but crushed and swallowed up, it was dying.

"Its crank, its giant's knee"—fact and symbol continue their fertile marriage to the end.

Too much nightmare, it has been said. Yes, but it is a nightmare of fact not of mere eloquence. Still it must be admitted that *Germinal* destroys one's capacity to feel. At least, it does that to mine. Each agony wrings the neck of its predecessor. One is broken at the end, not by feeling but by the unremittingly documented thunderclaps of the drama. Strangely enough it is the briefly drawn soldiers, rather than the miners, who move one most. This may be because they are silent; or simply because Zola, with his genius for getting the feeling of groups of people, has got their essential passive pathos. Then that copulation! The mines appear like an erotic gymnasium, and it gets a bit phoney after the first two or three hundred acts of petting, though Zola's invariable note of the positions adopted by lovers is as professionally pernicketty as Casanova's, and is a relief after Lawrence. Is this realism or mania, Zola's personal anxiety about impotence? And what a lot of dangling breasts and posturing bottoms! Zola was quite a case.

The real stuff of *Germinal* is the documentation and the groups of people on which the nightmare throws its strange light. This most bourgeois of all the bourgeois gave himself six months to get up the facts for *Germinal*; in that time he seems to have not merely assimilated all the technical details of mining—see, for example, his knowledge of the structure of the pit shaft, which becomes important in that terrific chapter when Souvarine, the anarchist, goes down alone by the ladder to saw through the beams and wreck the mine—all the people and conditions of the work, together with its economic and social aspects, but also to have fertilised it so that it is no longer dead stuff in a notebook, but life. I do not know whether it is a defect of our novels about mining that they are written by ex-miners. Zola, who came from outside, surpasses them, perhaps because what is thoroughly and consciously conquered by force of will is enormously stimulating to invention. The fault of the modern novelist in general is that he does not go outside his own world for his material, and I think that the decline of the power to tell a story or of the interest in doing so is due to this. Zola is an example of the value of veracity to a novelist. It is said that he had no natural power of observation; he relied upon learned facts and when a piece of observation is put in to clinch a picture—the woman coming with her children in order to amuse them with the sight of the riot, another woman stopping and re-starting her work at the sink while she quarrels, so that potato peeling goes on half the morning, the soldier blinking just before he is provoked to fire at the crowd, the comical formal politeness of the Mde. Raisseneur, a real tricoteuse, as she agrees with Souvarine's bloodiest theories—it is wonderful in its effect because it is exact. Zola's ability to describe the movements of crowds is due to the fact that, unlike natural observers, he had to study them and is therefore not carried away. Timid and plump, fussing with pencil and paper, Zola stands on the outskirts, noting not only the leaf-like swirl of humanity, but those single eddies, those sudden arrivals and departures of individuals, which indicate more than anything the pulse of a crowd's unreason.

Once Zola believed that evil existed in all men and also that man was an amoral natural force; another Zola—the plump little professor with a halo of Forain's funny caricature—believed in man's ideal aims. This duality enables him to make the agitator, Etienne, a complete

**Germinal*. By Emile Zola. Translated by Havelock Ellis. Everyman Library. 2/6.

human being. *Germinal* can be read as the case against the miners as well as the case for them and, looking at Etienne, you can say on the evidence, either that here is a man exploiting the workers in his own ambition to get out of the working class; or here is an idealist who, though he sacrifices the workers in fact, is in effect leading them to their emancipation. Working class leaders are not commonly studied with Zola's candour; they are never presented as egotists unless the novelist's object is to denounce them.

Of course, one may read *Germinal* and think that its philosophical background is as dated as the bestial conditions it describes; the mines are no longer brothels; people no longer starve at work; they starve for lack of it. War has become the crux of the social problem. But the greatness of *Germinal* lies in the exalted thoroughness of its exposure of the situation as it was during Zola's time, and equally in the mastery of its story. Its lesson to English novelists is that their education is incomplete and sterile if it does not apply itself to reinterpreting contemporary history. V. S. PRITCHETT

ANCIENT BRITONS

Prehistoric Communities of the British Isles. By V. GORDON CHILDE. *Chambers.* 20*s.*

Prehistoric England. By GRAHAME CLARK. *Batsford.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Both of these books are hopefully addressed to the general reader. That sloppy person should feel flattered, for both these authors entertain a high opinion of his powers of memory and concentration. They have, however, assisted him with lavish illustrations. Innumerable line drawings, photographs of the often lovely objects found in tombs and equally fascinating photographs of ancient sites seen from the air help him to visualise the material out of which archæologists are striving to construct a picture of the slowly developing life of ancient Britain through several millenia. But the mass of detail is still formidable, and the expert archæologist, who has himself chipped flints, pieced fragments of a beaker together and known the glory of excavating a passage grave, is apt to forget that his veteran hands have taught him much that no "general reader" can hope to remember with his casual eyes. The two books follow somewhat different methods of exposition. Professor Childe adopts an historical plan and carries us, culture by culture, in the order of time, from the Old Stone Age down to the Roman occupation. Mr. Clark, after a brief historical sketch, builds up an account of the evolving life of our forerunners in chapters that deal separately with the food quest, dwellings, mining, trade, burial, sacred sites, and so on. If the latter method assists the imagination to grasp the externals of life round the ancient monuments we know, the former gives us a more orderly and satisfying picture of each successive society in the long series. Mr. Clark's is the easier book to read, but Professor Childe, with more space at his disposal, has placed a much greater wealth of fact within our reach. Mr. Clark deals only with England, a distinction very difficult to justify; while Professor Childe ranges over the British Isles. Even this limitation is difficult to maintain and in fact he does not adhere to it rigidly. For precisely because Britain was (save in the dim beginnings of human habitation) an island, it was exposed to the most complicated play of external influences from the most various directions, always from traders, occasionally from missionaries, and often from conquerors. Professor Childe has spent much of his life in tracking these influences to their origins. Mr. Clark, none the less, dwells per-

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ROBERT HALE

suasively on the habit of this island, even in prehistory, of asserting its own identity.

The "general reader," if this reviewer may speak for him, has a possibly simple-minded test that he applies to archæological books. How far do they help him to reconstruct in imagination the life of the peoples who used these flints and pots? It is not that he lacks interest in the slow and intricate processes of inference and classification by which results are reached. Some chapters in that record are as fascinating as anything in the history of science. To trace and date the migrations of a people across the whole continent of Europe through many centuries by the minute study of scratches on potsherds is as triumphant a use of scientific method as anything the biologists have done with the skeletons of extinct mammals. But in the end one hopes to stand in Maiden Castle or Avebury Circle and see the people who built them at work, much as one may at Herculaneum. That ambition, so stated is, we know, fantastic, for we have the books they were reading in the Italian city when Vesuvius erupted. But it is amazing, if one follows either of these authors attentively, how much one may learn about the externals of the bronze age and the neolithic way of life. Thus they cooked and thus they went to bed: we can guess their daily menus: we can handle the buttons and brooches of their hypothetical cloaks: aerial photographs will give us the plan of their ploughed fields and tell us more about their methods of cultivation than the average townsman knows about the farming of to-day: we know how they stored their grain in pits and planned their farmsteads; how they hunted; how their armourers made their swords by techniques that evolved through slow centuries; we can all but watch the skeletons that once were miners labouring with picks of deers' antlers to extract the flint from deep galleries cut in the subterranean chalk: we can even follow the trade of the pedlars who touted over the length of Icknield Way for broken tools of bronze to melt and re-fashion again. But who were these people? What was their speech? And what were their thoughts?

Both authors go a very long way, probably as far as any sober scientist dare yet go, to answer our curiosity about the economic life of ancient Britain. Both are cautious, perhaps ultra-cautious, in answering the more intriguing questions, but each has something to tell us. Mr. Clark, who seems to despair of knowing anything at all when he comes to the subject of religion, is illuminating about art. He shows us, for example, how Celtic craftsmen took a realistic classical subject from a Greek coin and step by step turned it into an abstract curvilinear design. Of this tendency he gives us several startling illustrations of which, perhaps, the most significant is the white horse cut in the chalk near Wantage. It has totally lost any realistic resemblance to a horse one can stroke and mount: but it conveys a superb impression of equine motion: it is the idea, the curvilinear pattern of speed. When one has followed this interpretation through several instances, one does know how the primitive Celtic visual imagination worked. As to speech Professor Childe is decidedly helpful, for he makes it at least probable that the "beaker" people who invaded this island between the last neolithic and the first bronze phase spoke a Gaelic language.

To Professor Childe also we are grateful for a few passages of insight in which he will risk a cautious guess about the ideas of these early people. That characteristic pot, which gave its name to these same Gaelic invaders, must surely have had a ritual significance. Was the beaker used for their sacred drink, that figured in their rite of initiation? One could quote for that conjecture parallels from the South Seas. But there is a good deal of material bearing on the thought of our British forerunners that neither of these authors mentions. Neither has a word to say about that audacious giant who lifts his symbol of fertility above the spires of Cerne Abbas. Neither of them discusses the chalk crosses of the Chilterns, or any of the evidence of an interest in the heavens and the stars.

But over the megalithic culture Professor Childe—alas only for a page or two—does allow his imagination some little play. He argues that this "culture" was first of all a religion, a missionary church, that taught some creed of immense significance about the after-life, and carried its faith round the earth with its architecture, as Christians carried their cruciform cathedrals with their gospel. But what did they teach within the stone circle, while the uninitiated stood beyond the ditch? We may never be able to guess, if we confine our scrutiny to Stonehenge and Carnac. But an amateur guess has haunted me, since I saw the riches of prehistoric Malta. Is it absurd to suggest that the plan of the passage grave, which seems to hold the secret of this cult, represented the womb? In this womb of the earth-Mother the corpse, crouched like an unborn babe, was laid to sleep to await re-birth—perhaps in the form of reincarnation in a descendant. You may see in Malta, beside the gross stone images of the Great Mother, an exquisite statuette in clay of a priestess of this neolithic rite, asleep as she awaits revelation. Was hers the first Catholic church that evangelised the world and carried its beliefs all the way from Land's End to Easter Island? Is it ignorantly rash to suggest that one day an archæologist, who is also a student of folklore, may discover clues to Avebury in far away Assam, or it may be among the Hos of Orissa, where aboriginal tribes still erect megaliths, observe the kindly ethics of the cult of ancestors and play in an annual saturnalia with death?

H. N. BRAILSFORD

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NEW NOVELS

England is my Village. By JOHN LLEWELYN RHYS. *Faber.* 6s.
The Family. By NINA FEDOROVA. *Collins.* 8s. 6d.
Walk like a Mortal. By DAN WICKENDEN. *Dent.* 9s. 6d.
Delilah Upside Down. By BRUCE MARSHALL. *Heinemann.* 7s. 6d.

As the first of the books on the above list is a collection of short stories, so-called, and as the three novels that go with it are not up to much, perhaps I may be allowed to add something to my earlier remarks on the short story, for which I have been so much harried by Mr. Pritchett.

It does not seem worth while to confuse the issue by drawing distinctions between "plot," "incident," "narrative," "action" and so forth. What I meant was that if a piece of writing is to be called a story something must *happen* in it. A description of a landscape is not a story, for instance. There must be some event, some shift of circumstance, and there must be sufficient element of surprise for the reader to be unable—not, perhaps, to foresee the end, but to foresee just how it will come about. I picked out *The Dead* because, apart from its atmosphere and character-interest, it is a very good story. It would still be a fairly good story if written by Agatha Christie. Something happens in it, a significant incident, a landmark in a man's life. A well-meaning, prosing idiot, stuffed with pudding and self-esteem, is suddenly punctured and, as it were, purified by the knowledge that a dead man is more alive than himself. The other fragment of Joyce that Mr. Pritchett picked out, *Grace*, has some wonderful dialogue in it, but it does not seem to me to be a story. There is no reason why it

should end where it does, and if one did not know that it were not so I believe one would take it to be unfinished.

If one asks that every story should contain an incident, one is not necessarily asking for a rape, a murder or even a sock on the jaw. It can be a very tiny happening, provided that the author feels it to be significant and can make it seem so. But there the question of talent and sincerity comes in. Katharine Mansfield, who presumably derived from Chekov, specialised in the kind of story that is no more than a small-scale psychological adventure. On the whole her work has not worn well, but one feels only that her taste is at fault and not that she is faking her own emotions. She was writing in the week-ending period of literature, when in spite of the war the outer world had not butted its way into the novelist's rose-grown cottage, and the tiny misfortunes of over-sensitised people could fill her horizon. That H. E. Bates and others should carry on with that type of story *now*, when an incendiary bomb in a baby's perambulator seems a commonplace, is a different matter. Even so, a lot of Katharine Mansfield's work would have been better if it had not been tied to the fiction form. A good example is the story about Miss Moss, the fat unsuccessful actress who is on the point of going on the streets. There is no element of surprise in it, or hardly any; it would have been better as simply a clinical study of a woman contemplating prostitution. And this raises the point which, I think, is also raised by *England is my Village*—the question of whether it would not be better for many who call themselves short-story writers to drop this difficult form and specialise in the "sketch," the piece of descriptive or narrative writing that does not pretend to be a story.

John Llewelyn Rhys was a young airman who died on active service last autumn. He had written earlier books, but this one, posthumously published and evidently not revised by him, is a collection of fragments probably best described as sketches. Some are third person and have more or less a story form, but they are all interconnected, obviously autobiographical, the same young airman and the same girl reappearing in most of them. They seem to me to demonstrate the advantage of not dressing up a mere incident as a story. An airman, a sailor, or anyone else who lives an active life sees many things that are worth describing in themselves, and if he happens to be able to hold a pen, by merely recording and inventing nothing he can give a reader the same sort of pleasure that one gets from watching a skilled blacksmith or cabinet-maker at work. John Llewelyn Rhys probably did not possess much inventive faculty and would have been mediocre as a "straight" novelist, but he was passionately interested in aviation—he had been a commercial airman as well as being in the R.A.F.—and at the same time too sensitive to take its tragic side for granted. All that he wrote is full of the fascination of the air, but curiously enough this is mixed up with a kind of melancholy that goes beyond the premonition of death. Anyone whose memories stretch over more than thirty years must be struck by the fact that the aeroplane has failed to come up to expectations. Until the Wright brothers raised their machine off the ground for fifty-nine seconds, man's "conquest" of the skies was looked forward to as a wonderful release, and the aviator of the future was thought of as a superman soaring among the clouds with the majestic grace of an eagle. H. G. Wells's early stories are full of this godlike figure. Actually, the outstanding features of the aeroplane are its noise, danger and expensiveness, and the men who operate it are necessarily of the same type as dirt-track riders and racing motorists, *i.e.*, very young, with perfect health and nerves, and possessing the internal-combus-

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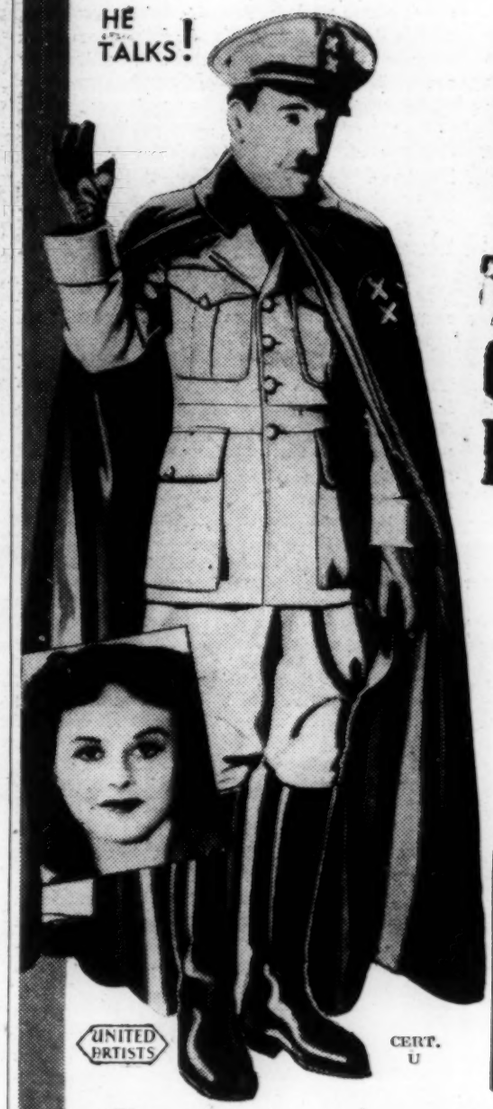

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tion mind, which does not generally go with intellectuality. From the point of view of people on the ground, an aeroplane is simply a thing that drops bombs on you. To a passenger the thing that dominates everything else is the diabolical noise; to a pilot, apparently, it is strain, exhaustion, cold and the ever-present consciousness of danger. Nearly every one of the sketches in this book is a tale of fear, from the controlled but still conscious fear of the bombing pilot setting out on a long flight over Germany, to the black terror of the test-pilot when the new machine suddenly refuses to answer the controls. And there is another reason for the melancholy that pervades the whole book—the consciousness that an airman's active life, even if he is lucky enough not to be killed, is hardly longer than a boxer's. A very effective sketch at the beginning of the book shows a youthful hero of the last war reappearing twenty years on as a worthless red-faced drunkard. The description of a parachute descent is also a remarkable piece of writing. As books go nowadays, this is an exceptional book.

The other three books on my list are of only moderate value, but *The Family* is much the best. It is what people call a "worthy" book, not the sort of novel I care for, I admit, but good of its kind. An account of a boarding-house kept by refugee Russians in China, it is the kind of story in which people come and go in great numbers and variety, giving, therefore a "panorama" of a very mixed society. *Walk Like a Mortal* is an almost unreadable book about an adolescent American surrounded by superlatively uninteresting people. It is the sort of book in which every trivial fact is commented on and over-emphasised in a way that reminds one of a gorilla playing the piano. *Delilah Upside Down*, on the other hand, is elegantly written, but its subject-matter is silly. The action takes place in a French château in the early inactive period of the war, and some British officers, guarding a consignment of explosives, are witnesses of various mysterious happenings that are finally explained in a manner which I will not reveal, but which is so absurd as to cause a feeling of irritation. The book also has a pornographic side to it. A girl of eighteen pursues a middle-aged man, trying to tempt him with such remarks as "Would it excite you if I took all my clothes off?" However, "nothing happens" in the end. This is the book of a man who knows how to write without being certain what he wants to write about. These three novels that I have mentioned were selected from among a number of others, all far inferior. I must record my opinion that the novels that are coming out at present are at a terribly low level, the lowest, probably, within living memory. It is a poor consolation to reflect that the ones coming out in Germany are probably worse.

GEORGE ORWELL

The February issue of LABOUR MONTHLY has already brought circulation to a new high record. The first print of 25,000 was completely sold out in 7 days. Why is this? LABOUR MONTHLY is gaining ever wider recognition as the one political monthly which expresses a realistic understanding of the world situation, bringing clarity where bewilderment is felt and guidance for political advance where frustration and defeat are feared. May we advise you to order a copy immediately through your newsagent? It will cost you Sixpence; or Sevenpence-halfpenny for a post paid copy from the Publishing Offices, 134 Ballards Lane, London, N.3.

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Poets of Tomorrow. *Hogarth Press.* 6s.

Inscapes. By FRANCIS SCARFE. *Fortune Press.* 5s.

Letter in Wartime and Other Poems. By H. B. MALLALIEU. *Fortune Press.* 6s.

England is still a nest of singing birds; an editor I know tells me that, of the unsolicited contributions he receives, sixty per cent. are in verse. The difficulty is to find the nightingales. The second series of *Poets of Tomorrow*, "*Cambridge Poetry* 1940," reveals the faults which characterise our younger poets, and which are as damaging to their work as were the artificial heartiness and innocence of the Georgians to theirs.

> The eleven young poets from Cambridge whom we present [writes the Hogarth Press] are strikingly different in many ways from their predecessors; they are also different from the poets who dominated the scene during the 'thirties, and from whose influence many of them, on their own confession, have been at pains to escape . . . at the same time they feel that their constant aim should be to write as simply and directly as possible, and this goes hand in hand with an interest in the ballad and all forms of popular art.

In practice the eleven poets are not in the least different from those who dominated the scene in the thirties, except that they are not so good, and their efforts to escape are consequently pathetic. Auden dominates them, and no amount of "writing simply and directly" is going to help, any more than "an interest in the ballad, and all forms of popular art" which can hardly equal Auden's own.

The truth is that modern English poetry is going through a phase in which the faults of the Auden school predominate. Just as Pope's taste in words and rigidity of diction clamped his successors into the deadening vice of the heroic couplet, so the austere didactic no hanky-panky left-wing orthodoxy of the Auden-Spender Pylon period (a period which both have quitted themselves) is now imposing its dreary classicism on the imitative young.

> This hour ushers in a new decade;
> Enormous continents lie dark ahead.
> We voyage slowly, holding back, afraid,
> Waiting a Nansen's or a Stanley's tread.
>
> As down calm hillside rides the sullen news
> Of private deathbed, public massacre
> Murder of children wringing human tears
> Scattering the gathered peace of afternoon.
>
> For one walks now among enemies
> Always in defence against the expected slight,
> The look that is not held and the unreceptive hand.

Here are three quotations from Mallalieu, Scarfe, Nicolas Moore, which are almost welded by nullity. This kind of poetry, these colourless iambics with their flat rhymes and correct epithets, is the punishment inflicted on us for the sins of the twenties by the poets of the thirties. Because Georgian poets were whimsical, arty, clever-clever or un-Marxist we have to suffer this new prim Muse in bicycle clips with her

> But at my back I always hear
> Spain, China, Prague, and Addis Ababa.

It doesn't matter whether the feelings of young poets are correct, whether they have carried a banner for Spain across Hampstead Heath; what matters is the strength of their feelings and their capacity for minting art from them. The austerity of Auden, a reaction from the twenties, becomes priggishness, his warnings from experience become fear of experience, his political energy becomes the echo of *News Chronicle* distress. These Cambridge poets are only a little younger than Barker or Dylan Thomas, who have both got well away from all this kind of thing, and whose brew is very different from the orthodox chalky cowslip wine. Why not imitate *them?* Of the individual poets Nicolas Moore, who is a prolific writer, has a sharpness of outline which is redeeming, one discerns in his writing the lineaments of a face, though it is of the usual pink-prefect variety. E. V. Swart, who had a good poem in *New Verse*, has another here. He is refreshing because he imitates Empson not Auden. Terence Tiller has imagination, George Scutfield wit, Jack Moreton Hopkinises, Maurice James Craig is rather dull. There are short notes on each poet, "His chief interests are religion and Auden's poetry," "He is a Christian pacifist and hopes to become a medical missionary," "He writes a great deal of poetry but considers most of it too personal to be published," and so on. Oxford poetry would be no better, but one regrets that these young Cambridge poets are not making mistakes, and keeping them to themselves, since they can afford to wait, rather than being so thinly correct, late pupils of a school whose masters have left it.

H. B. Mallalieu seems hardly to be a poet at all, but Francis Scarfe has possibilities. There is liveliness, and he is one of the few young poets to read French, and to write a sensuous lyric.

> My love, my love, fair was the river
> At noon in the high reaches,
> Where the rills dropped through the clover
> Over pebbles bright as peaches.

His poetry has variety but his translations are too literary.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

BRAKING THE TRADE CYCLE

Public Investment and the Trade Cycle in Great Britain. By R. F. BRETHERTON, F. A. BURCHARDT and R. S. G. RUTHERFORD. *Oxford University Press.* 30s.

The trade cycle is the deadliest of all the diseases of the capitalist system. And perhaps the incurable one. In the last twenty years, as the authors of this painstaking, "medical" treatise remark in their introduction, its ravages have been more violent and its social and political effects more disturbing and disastrous than ever before. What causes it? Each and every crank will have an answer. The money cranks will say that it is due to the maladjustment between the supply and the demand of money. But they mistake effects for causes. The nature cranks will argue that it is caused by the incidence of good or bad crops. But they forget that the trade cycle is primarily an industrial disease. It is only after millions and millions of industrial workers have been thrown out of work and are semi-starving that the agriculturists begin to burn their surplus crops or dump their glutted coffee in the sea. The more practical-minded will attribute the increasing severity of the disease to the maldistribution of wealth—to the accumulation of

economic power in the hands of the large monopolist corporations. There is point in this accusation. But comes Mr. J. M. Keynes with a scientific diagnosis of the disease which makes the cranks look foolishly inexact and amateurish. The booms and slumps of the trade cycle, he says, are caused by an investment disequilibrium. This is the theory to which the authors of this book incline.

If we accept the Keynesian definition of investment we can have no quarrel with this diagnosis. Income is derived from production, which consists of consumption goods and capital goods. If the national economy is to balance, then money incomes devoted to consumption will exactly purchase the consumption goods and the money income devoted to saving or investment will exactly purchase the capital goods. But there is no power or control in the capitalist system which ensures that these parts will balance. Savings are purchasing power put into an uncontrolled, privately operated and irresponsible money machine: they become invested only when they are actually spent on capital goods. "The performance of the act of saving," Mr. Keynes writes, "is in itself no guarantee that the stock of capital goods will be correspondingly increased." Capitalists may hoard their savings—they may even dis-invest—when they are frightened by Socialist politicians at home or by warlike politicians abroad. Bankers in like circumstances may dog-in-the-manger their bank cash. And just as the capitalist system may under-invest at one time, so it may over-invest at another, that is, when entrepreneurs and company promoters become thirsty for profits, and become excited by the sight of excessive profiteering and indulge in an orgy of new capital issues. If you really want to trace the psychological cause and effect of the trade cycle you need only study two characteristics of the capitalist soul—fear and greed.

The authors of this book do not pry deep into capitalist psychology. They are content to remark that a boom is always accompanied by a rapid extension of the real capital equipment of the country in the form of producers' goods (factories, machinery, ships) and of durable consumption goods (houses and motor cars), that this growth in equipment is necessarily accompanied by a rapid rise in money incomes and in the volume of spending or consumption, which in turn creates a further demand for the equipment needed to produce them. This process of cumulative expansion comes to an end for one reason or another and there follows a period of general contraction which is also cumulative. Thus there are two approaches to the control of the trade cycle. The first is to smooth out the variations in the demand for capital equipment and so to reduce the fluctuations in the final consumers' incomes which this demand generates. The second is to make good artificially—by unemployment reliefs and consumer credits—the gap in incomes and spending power caused by a decline in the activity of the constructural trades. The authors of this book attack the problem from the constructional, not the consumers' end. This is the more direct approach, but they realise that even this form of control would be ineffective if ups and downs in the export of capital goods were neglected.

A further restriction is imposed upon their book by these scientific, research-minded authors. The Government can influence activity in the constructional trades by monetary policy, fiscal policy, industrial policy (tariffs, subsidies, credits, and price or output control), and finally by investment policy, which is popularly called the policy of public works. The authors confine themselves to the last and even restrict their researches to public investment, that is, to public works or constructional activity undertaken by the central government, the

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local authorities and semi-public bodies such as the railways, the Central Electricity Board, the private electricity companies and certain "public utility" enterprises. Within these narrow limits the authors have made a searching and minute study of how public works have affected the trade cycle in Great Britain between the two world wars. The size and timing of the capital works undertaken by these bodies and their effects upon employment have been analysed statistically, and an appendix contains no less than 62 tables giving the statistics from which the authors have drawn their conclusions.

But can general conclusions be drawn from so restricted, so minute, a study? The authors suggest that the public works attempt at control of the trade cycle failed because it was not bold enough. Omitting the years 1936 and 1937, which were affected by the rearmament programme, public gross investment varied from a maximum of £372 millions in 1927 to a minimum of £290 millions in 1933. From this point it recovered and if we include rearmament the figure for 1937 exceeded £500 millions. But would even this volume be sufficient to put the brake on a decline if private enterprise became deflationist? How can works in the hands of public bodies ever be effective enough for control if the private demand remains so high a proportion of the total demand for capital goods? In 1934 private demand was over 60 per cent. of the total and the average is between 50 per cent. and 60 per cent. And how can control even over the capital works of public bodies be effectively held if the central government cannot coerce the local authorities to accept and abide by a single programme? To cure the capitalist system of this trade cycle disease, it is not enough to try doctoring with public works in small or restricted doses: it is probably necessary to construct an entirely new economic system. URBANUS

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GONE TO EARTH

The Story of a Norfolk Farm. By HENRY WILLIAMSON. *Faber.* 10s. 6d.

Mr. Williamson possesses the two qualities, not over-frequent in combination, of high sensitivity and courage. The former was immediately revealed in his earliest writings: the latter is displayed on almost every page of this new book, from the Oswald Mosley quotation beneath the title, with which he defiantly nails his colours to the mast, to the declaration of faith on the final page:

> One day salmon will leap again in the clear waters of London river; and human work will be creative, and joyful.
>
> One day the soul of man, shut in upon itself during the long centuries of economic struggle, will arise in the light of the sun of truth.
>
> And now I lay down the pen, and return to the plow.

The intervening four hundred pages tell why, and how, he turned to the plow in the first instance.

Many years ago, as his large public is aware, he left Fleet Street for the West Country, where in due course, after years of struggle, he established his literary reputation as a writer of fine prose about the wild-life of the English countryside. He could have stopped at that. He could have settled down as a popular, steady-selling author, a Hawthornden Prizeman. He could have been the pet of the libraries—"you know, my dear, that man who writes so wonderfully about animals." Libraries love authors who serve up the same dependable mixture—"we've the new Williamson, madam, you always like his." He could have gone on almost indefinitely, exploiting Exmoor, curlews, solan-geese, and stars. The temptation to a recently poor man with a large family must have been considerable, but it was resisted. He realised, he tells us, that he had "outgrown Devon." It was time to go away and do something different.

Like his friend, T. E. Lawrence, Mr. Williamson feels he is unusual and craves desperately, by forcing himself into contact with commoner men on their own ground, to achieve normality. He has a sound instinct that writing cuts one off, that it isn't a man's job (some would prefer to say not a *full* job for anyone, man or woman), and that some other work, more practical and directly utilitarian, is needed to normalise one's relations with the community. So, heroically, he determined to become a farmer. Heroically, because, however great his knowledge of Nature, he was as ignorant of agriculture as any townsman, and because he entered farming almost at the nadir of its depression, before the economics of war-time came, temporarily at least, to the rescue.

The book tells how he discovered the farm, neglected and fit for little but shooting, near the unbelievably-named village of Whelk-next-the-Sea; how, after interminable hagglings and legal delays, he achieved ownership and possession; how, while only too conscious of his own status as a novice, he was compelled more and more to force his own theories upon the innate conservatism of his East Anglian labourers; and how, in defiance of all probability, he "broke even" when he made out his second year's profit and loss account, and to-day can show a prosperous farm where neglect and ruin were before.

Presumably his claim must be true, though, as it is the achievement of a novice backed only by such capital as he could acquire through writing and broadcasting in his dwindling spare time, it is hard to reconcile with his own (and others') familiar contention that agriculture was so hopeless in the nineteen-thirties. His photographs, unbeautiful and only moderately interesting, testify to the neglected gates and tracks he took over, and he reprints such a wealth of book-keeping details, bills, and legal correspondence that only a qualified accountant with rural experience would dare to challenge him. That so much can be published in a book intended for the general reader is, perhaps, an indication of the much greater interest which is being taken in the country to-day, not as a picturesque playground but as a vital workshop of the nation.

Of course, this is much more than the story of a Norfolk farm. It is another chapter in the story of Mr. Williamson, who is as little reticent about the results of his self-analysis and his family-life as he is about his business. There is a little—tantalisingly little, but this is the publishers' responsibility—about his conversion to Fascism by a titled lady who was driven up to the granary one day. It would have been interesting to trace the transition whereby the writer of *The Pathway* became the reader of *Action*, and one wonders if the publishers were right in persuading him not to prejudice the hearing of his main theme by the inclusion of controversy.

His style is plainer than usual, as befits his subject. There are no pyrotechnics; only, occasionally, the genuine gleam of a finely observed moment, finely recorded, when his eye has wandered from the furrow to what is flying above. There is the usual intense sincerity, which sometimes, because of a constitutional deficiency in humour, becomes solemnity. And always there is the abiding impression of courage—the courage of a man who realised in time that a living artist must never doze in the niche of fame which he has carved or he will awaken to find it has become a shelf.

GEOFFREY TREASE

R.A.F.

The R.A.F. in Action. With 100 photographs. *Black.* 7s. 6d.

The Royal Air Force in Pictures. Prepared by MAJOR OLIVER STEWART. *Country Life.* 5s.

Wings of Victory. By IVOR HALSTEAD. *Lindsay Drummond.* 6s.

A.A.S.F. By CHARLES GARDNER. *Hutchinson.* 7s. 6d.

Our War in the Air. By AIR COMMODORE L. E. O. CHARLTON. Liberty Handbooks No. 1. *Dent.* 1s.

When Mr. Churchill said of the R.A.F.: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," he spoke the simple truth. This superb public utterance becomes even simpler and truer when it is set against a host of intensely private ones, eloquent in a different idiom, such as that which Charles Gardner heard a R.A.F. man mutter as he stumped about an aerodrome near Sedan on May 12th, 1940: "Bomb the b—'s, bomb the b—'s, but for Christ's sake what with?" Such statements open, for a moment at any rate, a straight and happy avenue in the vast labyrinth of the war. They clear away the doubts, hesitations and reservations which obstruct thought and feeling as we press on. Almost to a man the many fall in behind the Prime Minister in praise of the young men who, whatever may be the outcome, put off from us all an evil day. Perhaps there is no more to be said that cannot be better said behind the heart's shut doors. But the principal having spoken his magnificent lines, the chorus of praise was bound to rush in, and here some of them are. They make a brave noise. Indeed, a book on this subject at this time would have to be pretty bad to muff its welcome, and these should appeal to debtors glancing at them in the proper mood of "grim and gay."

The picture books appealed to me most because they left me with some private praising

to do. The bond between photograph and observer is cool and unobtrusive. You can take it or leave it, there is no digging of an unresponsive rib; and when response does come it is thrilling. *The R.A.F. in Action*, a semi-official publication inspired by the Air Ministry, is an extremely skilful pictorial record, the selection being most adroit, the photography brilliant. Photograph number 22, of a fighter pilot, and 67, of a bomb-aimer, affected me in different ways as the most moving I have ever seen, and the bizarre beauty of the pattern of number 75, showing a flight of Lysanders breaking for attack, is evidence of the new kingdom which the camera has won since it faced the aeroplane. Squadron-Leader Williams writes a sober account of the complex organisation and vast range of R.A.F. work. He only allows praise to appear as a steady glow beneath his recital of dark and difficult facts; and ends with two sentences as strong as a steam-hammer:

> That other dictator, Cromwell, once said: "Give me a soldier who knows what he is fighting for and loves what he knows." Such is the spirit of the Royal Air Force, confident in the knowledge that daily our air strength is growing and that with it grow the hopes of small nations to live as free nations, and of poor men to live as free men.

The Royal Air Force in Pictures covers much the same ground but with more emphasis on the technical details of R.A.F. machines. Major Stewart makes the camera as informative as is possible without giving any secrets away, and attaches a short technical autobiography (subject to the same rather drastic limitations) to each aeroplane type. His pictures will be particularly useful to enthusiastic aircraft-spotters.

Mr. Halstead begins *Wings of Victory* by saying: "This is surely the first book about one of the decisive battles of the world to be written, set up, bound, published and sold on the battlefield," and continues in the same expansive, excited but nevertheless attractive manner. Writing his book in the light of the pyrotechnics provided by Göring for Londoners, he naturally fills it with fireworks of various kinds, and will never be thought a niggard in praise or pride. He leads off with the letter of a dead airman to his mother, which has been publicised by the *Times*, and includes Mr. Priestley's postscript sketch of a bomber pilot, Gardner's broadcast of a convoy attack which set the B.B.C.'s Sunday evening audience buzzing, tributes to the R.A.F. specially collected from provincial mayors, "pathetic" contributions to Spitfire funds, and many other exhibits. The airman's letter is a remarkable document; but comparing it with Priestley's commentary and with what I know of the R.A.F., I should say that in its lofty seriousness and its particular conception of society and social service it is far from typical of what the average airman says, thinks or feels.

A.A.S.F. is another book which gains in warmth because its author was on the spot, though a different one. Mr. Gardner went out as B.B.C. observer to Rheims with the Advanced Air Striking Force and remained with them until they were swept across the Channel in the fall of France. In his racy way he gives a very accurate impression of *drôle de guerre* and of his own private wars as a novelty in war correspondents. For eight months out of nine the A.A.S.F. waited behind the Maginot Line, finding that man for man and machine for machine they were on top of the opposition, while the phoneyness of the war lapped and sapped them. Visited by Chamberlain "as spry as a turkey, finding it all great fun," by the great frost, by miasmas bred of rigid censorship and nervous immobility, they served a dead defensive strategy, while the living power of a terribly mobile attack massed against them. When Hitler struck they had no chance. But Mr. Gardner's diary of May and June, while it admits an awakening to reality which was ruder than defeat, is ablaze with the spirit which struck back in August and September:

> I saw Cobber to-night. He was dirty and unshaven, and wolfing hard at a steak in the Strasbourg with the other lads from 73. They had all been up fighting and flying, and fighting again, since the start of the blitzkrieg. . . . How any of our people get out alive beats me, but then most of them were in the Strasbourg drinking beer. To-morrow morning they've got to be on the aerodrome again at 3.30—and, as they were telling me, that feeling of talking to ghosts crept on again. How many of them will be in the Strasbourg to-morrow night?

Finally, for those who find such fare a thought too richly spread, there is the iron tonic of Air Commodore Charlton's little book, whose object and performance is appraisal rather than praise. He manages a very bold and clear outline of the main lines of development of air strategy in this war, but as usual in his work there are passages where he seems to delight to trail his coat. For instance:

> The situation as regards aircraft output is always less anxious than that of the equivalent personnel, the one being a mechanical process and the other entirely dependent on the human factor. Once the plants are working to capacity, and the raw material is available, the turning out of aircraft becomes a business like shelling peas, the required numbers being calculated on immediate service needs, reserves, and an agreed expansion rate.

Shelling peas! I wonder how many of those responsible, either technically or administratively, for turning out our new aircraft will rub their eyes at that?

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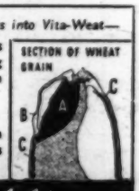

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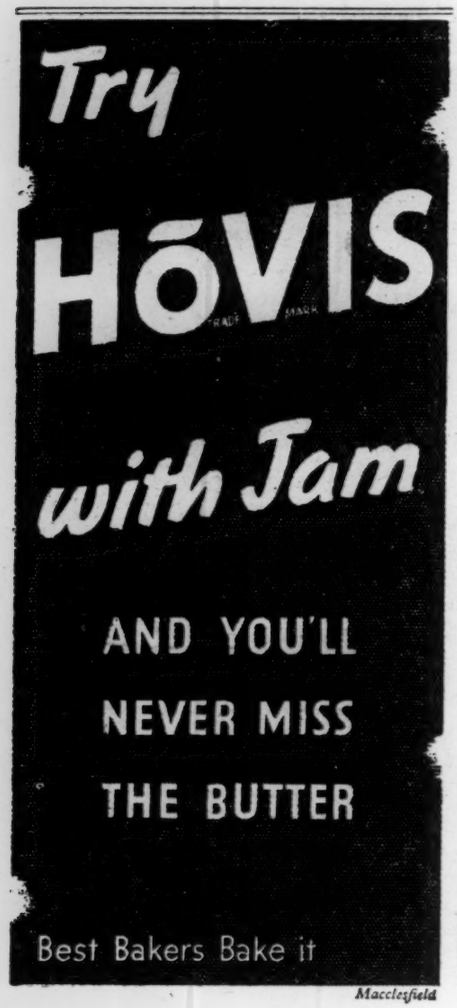
Portraits of Christ. By E. SENIOR and ERNST KITZINGER.

Caricature. By E. H. GOMBRICH and E. KRIS. *Penguin.* 1s. each.

As the world grows poorer, stupider and worse educated, the chance of civilisation surviving grows less. One begins to clutch at straws; and here, unexpectedly, comes floating by a plank. If the Penguin publishers really intend to issue a series of short, readable, illustrated monographs at a shilling each, edited and written by scholars and people of taste, it is just possible they will arouse such interest in visual art that when that government comes into power which is to decree the conversion of all picture galleries and museums to movie-houses there will be quite a brisk opposition. The two volumes before me—*Portraits of Christ* by Miss Senior and Ernst Kitzinger, and *Caricature* by E. H. Gombrich and E. Kris—justify the highest hopes. That is why I appeal earnestly to the publishers to curb their ambition. Let us have no more illustrations in colour. Coloured reproductions of caricatures which were meant to appear as coloured prints are permissible though not commendable: coloured reproductions of oil-paintings, water-colours, frescoes and mosaics are the devil. At their best they are unsatisfactory; and in cheap books, such as these, they must be at their worst. To anyone who comes at painting through such repulsive objects as those displayed at the end of *Portraits of Christ*, all that may have been said in the text, well said and wisely said, to the honour and glory of the art must appear false and foolish. Cut them out; and replace them by honest photographs in black and white.

The essay on portraits of Christ is simple and may even appear elementary. It is scholarly none the less, and behind every statement and expression of opinion one is aware of a reassuring buttress of solid learning. It should be read, not only by artists and amateurs, but by those ecclesiastics who are manifesting a laudable desire to have their churches decorated, not by firms of commercial *pasticheurs*, but, as churches were decorated in the ages of faith, by the best contemporary artists. These, it seems, sometimes give trouble by wishing to depart from what the clergy consider the correct presentation of Our Lord. We are reminded in this little book that every presentation is purely imaginary, the personal conception of some artist or other, since there is no contemporary description of Christ's appearance either in line and colour or in words. Not till the fourth century, when it became fashionable to assimilate the teacher of Christian ethics to a Greek philosopher, was the Master dignified with a beard; and the conception of him as a beardless young man has persisted down the ages and found favour in the minds of such seers as Castagno, Leonardo and Michelangelo. Before they quarrel with artists for being untraditional, clergymen would do well to make quite sure that they, themselves, know the history of the tradition they invoke.

Caricature is not so good as *Portraits of Christ*. Certainly it is less scholarly. But if we get less information and some hazardous judgments (*e.g.*, of Hogarth "All the artistic means acquired by Dutch genre art were at his disposal and helped him to express his surprising knowledge of the human heart, human behaviour and human expression") we are given bright ideas and ingenious theories which make the essay quite readable. In fact, both books are praiseworthy; and so is the idea behind the series. And I hope my good wishes for the venture will excuse, in the eyes of the publisher, my having offered in the first paragraph a bit of sincere, though perhaps distasteful, advice. CLIVE BELL



THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG DELINQUENTS

Juvenile Delinquency. By J. H. BAGOT. *Cape.* 5s.

In man and in magpies the instinct to collect is strong and in the main pleasurable. The acquiring, classifying, cabineting and cataloguing of any kind of object is a happy form of busy-idleness. But when the collection is made the trouble begins. Roman potsherds—even birds' eggs—may perhaps be dumped on the local museum. Stamps have their market value, but what becomes of the tram-tickets and match-box covers, the dried flowers and the twigs from historic sites? Do they, like the seaweeds and dead crabs of our childhood's efforts, go quietly into the dustbin when their owners lie quiet in their last sleep? Even the amassing of statistics, the aristocracy of collection—paid for by governments and dignified by a Royal Society of its own, is not quite free from this humiliating risk of sterility. It is true that the dust which settles on their covers leaves the figures intact within the volumes which they fill—but there is utter waste of the figures themselves unless pious hands are found to distil from them the meanings which may vitally influence human life in the future.

Such a pious task Mr. Bagot has performed in his comparative study of Juvenile Delinquency in Liverpool and the rest of England and Wales. He is to be cordially welcomed as one of the pioneers in the work of detailed local study, so much needed in this field. Liverpool, with nearly three times the national rate of juvenile crime, certainly seems indicated as one of the first places where such a study should begin.

In this connection it is interesting to note that during the years studied, 1934 and 1936, Liverpool magistrates used the method of Probation under an officer (as contrasted with mere discharge under the Probation of Offenders' Act) much less frequently than their colleagues in the country as a whole. They resorted far more freely to fines, which all too often simply meant that the parent pays up and the child hears no more of the matter. There is no mention here of the much more educational method of demanding restitution (if possible out of the child's own pocket money) to the person injured. But in any case no mere payment alone can make up for the personal care and supervision of a good Probation Officer. If Mr. Bagot's suggestion is correct that, "the small proportion of probation cases in Liverpool may be merely a matter of expediency; for already the probation service in Liverpool has outgrown its accommodation and its male officers have more cases than they can effectively supervise," one remedy for the high rate of children's offences in the City would seem to be obvious.

Many of Mr. Bagot's conclusions will be of much interest to all who care about the welfare of our less fortunate boys and girls: we are glad that he has had the courage to show the correlation between delinquency and the type of school attended. But his discussion of kinds of treatment is disappointingly meagre. It contains no mention of one of the most hopeful of all methods for dealing with children from really bad homes, viz., boarding out with foster-parents, a method used with such conspicuous success by Manchester.

In spite of many failures the wartime evacuation has convinced all whose eyes are not blind to everything but wet-beds and nits, that there is an immense number of women up and down the country whose maternal instinct can be drawn upon in the most natural of all forms of education. We must not forget them; when peace comes they have a great contribution to make in the diminution of crime.

We are glad to see a University lending its help to the production of a book of this kind—but who is responsible for letting it appear without an index? MARGERY FRY

Fifteen Poets. *Oxford University Press.* 6s.

This anthology is an attempt to bridge the gap which seems to exist between "complete works" and those anthologies which present our national poetry as wholly lyrical. For this purpose the famous passages have been assembled from "the masters of English poetry from Chaucer to Matthew Arnold"—about 1,000 lines from each. The conventionality of the selections indicates that the book is designed for schools—for any reasonably well-read person would know all of the passages well already—and if literature teaching is to continue as an element in our education this anthology will serve a useful purpose. Yet one cannot resist speculating on the effect which handing out a set of these volumes would have on a form of boys and girls. How would it strike them, this bulky, unadorned collection of pieces they ought to admire? Respectful boredom would probably be the prevailing mood; and though each might find one or two things that pleased, it is a question how many would get up from their meal without a distaste for poetry which might last them for the rest of their lives. Literature teaching can only be successful if it is conducted in the least "schooly" kind of way by a teacher who really cares himself and who has some idea of what an adolescent is likely to like. Much of the best of our national poetry is, as it should be, out of the range of children. Each of the poets has a short introduction by a different hand. The brevity of these comments results in their being either a string of platitudes or a series of wisecracks. The wisecracks are the more welcome; for shock tactics often succeed with the young. F. L. Lucas should excite their interest in Wordsworth or W. H. Auden their interest in Byron where soberer estimates might serve only as a presoporific to the final soporific of the extracts themselves. But if this kind of thing is wanted, the Oxford Press have provided it as cheaply and conveniently as is possible.

About Motoring

IMAGINATION AND ROAD ACCIDENTS

THE main cause of the lamentable increase in road accidents since the outbreak of war is not named in most comments on the figures. It is admitted that Service drivers are largely responsible, but the commentators do these fine fellows scanty justice. It has been implied and stated that finding themselves at the wheel of a fast and costly vehicle, probably for the first time in their lives, they blaze away recklessly at high speeds. But the truth is far more subtle and less obvious. The Army vehicles are not, for the most part, particularly fast; neither their cars nor lorries nor motor cycles are designed for high speed, and are, indeed, often appreciably slower than the machines which the same firms used to build for civilian purposes. The special perils are the direct product of reduced road congestion. In the summer of 1939 every British road was congested with fast heavy traffic. Along many roads, and especially at week-ends, the double stream of motors amounted to a double queue. It was not always, or perhaps even often, a case of driving bonnet to tail-lamp, except when returning from the coast on Sunday night, or making for a popular resort on Saturday afternoon. But at least you could almost always see your next ahead, and be conscious of your next astern, even if a gap of a hundred yards of clear road existed before and behind you. The same was true of the oncoming vehicles utilising the other side of the road. Hence the driver dealt not so much with possibilities as with facts. He could actually see the other vehicles which created potential dangers for him. This was not necessarily as true at road junctions as on the straight; but even at road junctions he could often perceive in advance cars nosing their bonnets into the cross-stream of which he formed a part; or as he approached a junction, he could see the roofs of other cars topping the cross hedges to right or left. Moreover, his experience at every road junction along his route was similar—there were usually other vehicles shooting across just ahead of him, or fidgeting to cross as soon as he had passed onwards. These conditions reduced the tasks set to his imaginative faculties. He was led to picture what might happen if he misjudged an overtaking or chanced his luck at four cross-roads; but at least he was continuously reminded that road travel was full of risks, and that he must keep his wits about him, his foot near the brake, and be prepared for innumerable petty emergencies.

These conditions have now disappeared from the major portion of our road mileage. Road travel has become a comparatively solitary business. For miles at a time we have no visible pursuer astern, no visible leader ahead; and the other half of the road is empty, too. When we reach a crossing, the odds are that there will be no transverse traffic. So the driver's task is no longer to cope with traffic which is absolutely visible, but to imagine traffic which may at any moment intrude upon us from some unsuspected outlet or from behind some innocent-looking obstacle to vision; and all this without any warning at all, and possibly at quite high speed. It is in this respect that the Army driver is apt to fail. He receives a genuinely superb technical training. He handles his machine admirably. He means well. He is neither a fool nor a rogue. But he very often lacks the imagination to form any mental picture of the frightful suddenness and grim peril with which chance encounters on uncongested roads may be charged. If he is lucky, he survives some very narrow squeak during that dangerous period of his apprenticeship when, having emerged from the driving school, he has covered just sufficient mileage to fancy himself as a driver. That narrow squeak may sober him, as he remarks to himself, "Coo! That was a near 'un. I nearly got smeared all over the tarmac. Who'd ha' thought a nice patch of clear road would ha' filled up like lightning?" Or perhaps he actually witnessed the debris defiling the scene of a pal's mistake. Such sobering experiences will set the stolidest imagination to work. But if the tyro escapes such salutary warnings, his second phase is liable to be a trifle reckless; and it is during this second phase that fatal blunders normally occur. You cannot make many serious blunders with a ton of metal travelling at forty miles an hour, and escape unscathed.

The elimination of these accidents depends not so much on "criming" drivers for youthful blunders as upon training their imaginations. It is kind rather than cruel to see that they know the penalties of a misjudgment; that they inspect shattered vehicles; that they learn in detail the nature of injuries to stupid drivers, or to the civilians killed or maimed by stupidity. They are humane men, and they love both their health and their safety. They will learn quickly, if they are properly handled.

R. E. DAVIDSON

Week-end Competitions

No. 577

Set by Thomas Smallbones

Competitors are asked to imagine that, in face of the coming drink shortage they have been appointed publicity manager to a newly created Ministry of Drink. The usual prizes are offered for the best set of three "Drink Facts" suitable either for the Ministry's advertisements or for the Minister's public pronouncements.

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JOHN FORD'S production of
EUGENE O'NEILL'S
Mighty Drama of the Sea
The LONG VOYAGE HOME
CERT A
with
JOHN WAYNE · THOMAS MITCHELL · IAN HUNTER
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Speakers include:
D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P.
W. Rust Violet Lansbury

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Beechams Pills
Brand
WORTH A GUINEA A BOX

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RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, March 3rd.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 574

Set by Winifred Harper

I have noticed that Oscar Wilde has recently made an appearance as a Penguin. The usual prizes are offered for a piece of dialogue between Lady Bracknell, Lord Henry and Miss Prism on being offered to the masses in a paper book price sixpence (not more than 250 words).

Report by Winifred Harper

Penguins, while "lacking the dangerous Red element of the robin and shunning the immoral habits of the cuckoo" (Ack R.), have yet been condemned as "these irresponsible birds" (I.R.I.S.); they may bring popularity, may be "the Hollywood favourite of to-morrow," but they do not yet seem to have introduced Wilde's characters to a large public. Lord Henry Wotton—can it be because he does not figure in this particular Penguin?—eluded many competitors and spoke generally with the voice of Algy. Lady Bracknell proved easiest and so, quite in character, monopolised most of the conversations, ranging from near-Lady Catherine de Bourgh to pure Edith Evans.

The general failure of the entries was to give witticisms to all three characters; to make Miss Prism sparkle even, to make her utter innuendoes, in a way that would greatly have distressed one who found the chapter on the fall of the rupee "sensational"; to allow Lord Henry to pontificate in the tones of Lady Bracknell. For puns on publishers, the many Lanes with no turn-over, I was, perhaps oddly, unprepared. For reflections on the reading habits of the proletariat the word "masses" was, I suppose, sufficient invitation.

Most competitors eliminated themselves (though nearly all contained temptingly quotable bits) by failing to achieve equal results with all three characters. I.R.I.S. began well with:

Lady Bracknell: "My nephew, Algernon, informs me that I have become a penguin. Fortunately I have never placed any reliance on his opinions." "You misunderstand him, Lady Bracknell." "I always misunderstand everyone. It saves trouble,"

but slipped up over a name and did not stay the course. M. Cassel's opening provided the most authentic Prism:

"Yes, Lady Bracknell, at the railway station. I assure you that I should not have noticed it had not my eye fallen upon it while endeavouring to avert the gaze of a gentleman of foreign extraction."

Lady Bracknell: "Then he was not a gentleman. But the behaviour of persons of foreign extraction is immaterial. Did I understand you to speak of paper covers? Really we might be in France. . . . One would think the book was meant to be read."

—and divided books into two classes, "Those that everybody buys and nobody reads and those that nobody buys but everybody seems to have read," but she, or he, did not play fair with the rules.

Wilde's elegance is not easy to achieve in these days when, by "parting with their substance for the shadow of the sensational" (M. Crosbie) "every ragamuffin may become a connoisseur of illiteracy" (M. Malvern)—and none of the entries had the *élan* of the originals. I doubt if Lord Henry would ever have had a "remotest idea," but I suggest that the first prize go to P. C. Roscoe for the authenticity of his opening and the balance and variety of the whole, and that the second prize be divided between the very dissimilar entries of Romilly Cavan, failing largely from an excess of witticisms, and Allan M. Laing for his Lady Bracknell. And surely Wilde should have the last word on Penguins: "I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance."

FIRST PRIZE

Lady Bracknell: I have always been of opinion that the dissemination of literature among the masses is a mistake. There are far too many books published as it is, and in the present instance, when the work in question contains so many unpleasing references to ourselves, its publication seems to me to be more than usually superfluous.

Miss Prism: I have seen the work you speak of. I picked it up under a misapprehension, thinking it was a copy of Paley's Evidences, and started perusing it. It was some time before I realised my error. I fear the portrait it gives of myself is all too apt; nevertheless, let us not scoff at Truth, even when we find her in the most unlikely places, such as modern works of fiction. *You* will surely agree with me, Lord Henry?

Lord Henry: I, Miss Prism? I would not for one moment dream of scoffing. We must, of course, admit that Truth has not the remotest idea of how to dress, and that nowadays is the only unpardonable sin a woman can commit; yet she amply atones for this grave failing by generally neglecting to wear any clothes at all, except, of course, at dinner parties. As for this book you mention, I have not read it: I never read modern literature, it is far too probable. The art of lying is now practically extinct; we read blue books and realistic novels instead of history and metaphysics, and prefer the travels of Doctor Livingstone to those of Baron Munchausen.

P. C. ROSCOE

SECOND PRIZE

I

Lady Bracknell: Prism! What are you trying to conceal from me in that handbag?

Miss Prism: Indeed, Lady Bracknell, it is only one of the new sixpennies. A Penguin.

Lady Bracknell: The zoological significance of the smaller coinage at the moment escapes me. Pray explain yourself.

Lord Henry Wotton: Miss Prism refers to the issue, for popular consumption, of paper-backed volumes, foolishly named "Penguins," and sold at the cheap rate of sixpence each. You will agree, Lady Bracknell, that there is only one thing in the world worse than paying sixpence for a book, and that is having to pay seven-and-sixpence.

Lady Bracknell: I do not buy books, Lord Henry. I am aware that society demands certain books must be read, but I see no reason to pamper the authors by purchasing them: Prism, what is the book about?

Miss Prism: Incredible though it may seem, Lady Bracknell, the work deals with your private affairs and mine. Lord Henry, I think, is not referred to.

Lord Henry (languidly): I should hope not. No man in my position can afford to have his private affairs exposed to the vulgarity of linotype and half-inch margins.

Lady Bracknell: I cannot agree. There are worse things than being written about, even in the sixpennies. One might easily not be written about at all. Prism, where did you obtain this—ah—Penguin?

Miss Prism: At Victoria Station, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell: Ah, indeed! Your associations with London's larger termini have not been invariably so happy. You will give me the book, Prism. Pray buy yourself another copy.

ALLAN M. LAING

II

Lady Bracknell: From Society in paper covers to open revolution in no cover at all is but a step.

Lord Henry: The new Society is apparently largely composed of drones and detectives. To-day's wit is gone with the Wooster and Wimsey.

Lady Bracknell: What exceedingly unnecessary names people have nowadays. No wonder literature is in bad odour.

Lord Henry: The Englishman prides himself on being literal rather than literate. He never recognises himself for what he isn't. It explains why nowadays nothing succeeds like *Express*.

Miss Prism: I am not in favour of the modern mania for turning bad books into good books at a moment's press notice. As literature sows, so should it reap.

Lord Henry: Yet the Lane that has an unprofitable turning is improbable. The proletarian output on man's naked convictions is enormous. I detest nakedness when it is a cloak for morality.

Lady Bracknell: Indeed, the present idea of Man with a capital letter instead of the usual capital in good investments is most unsatisfactory.

Miss Prism: But must the average man of earnest aspirations forgo intellectual pleasures through poverty?

Lord Henry: "Average" is a word which should be blackballed in all the best dictionaries. And pleasure should always be expensive. To acquire it for sixpence is an insult to decadence.

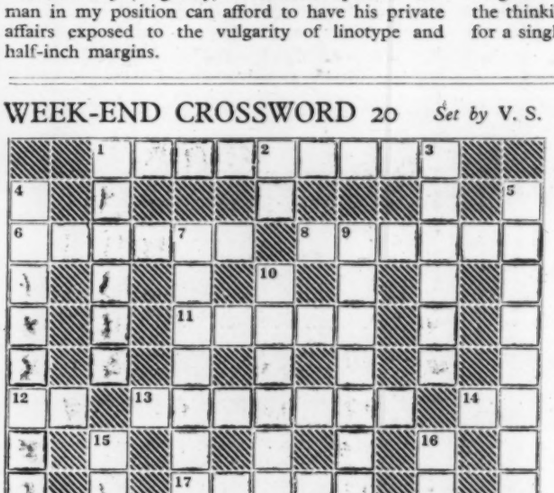
Lady Bracknell: In your position, Miss Prism, the word *sixpence* may have meaning, but it is scarcely the sort of sum *I* should choose for the coining of a phrase.

Lord Henry: Conversation no longer exists, alas! Gone, even, that time when nonsense made Cowards of us all. Talk was doomed when the lower orders vulgarised it with worthiness. Talk is the curse of the thinking Masses, who have betrayed aristocracy for a single piece of silver. . . .

ROMILLY CAVAN

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 20

Set by V. S.



The last week's winner is:

D. McAlpine, Burnbank, Polmont, Falkirk.

ACROSS

1. Shake! (4 and 5)
6. Not done to use German goods according to 'Arry. (6)
8. Fed up and cross? (6)
11. She takes an outsize in them. (5)
12 and 14. Twice I's light at heart. (4)
13. To telephone is sinful. (7)
14. See 12.
17. Workhouse wedding. (5)
18. Put the dog on the lead. (6)
19. The runner takes 2nd, 3rd and 4th places in the race. (6)
21. Decline to be lucky in love and unlucky at cards? (4 and 5)

DOWN

1. Drill the bounder. (6)
2 and 20 *rev.* Twice 2 is 4. (2 hyphen 2)
3. Decide where to sit. (6)
4. Depressed the receiver? (6 and 5)
5. In a motor race. (11)
7. Diana's top of her form. (9)
9. Perfect fool over insects—they all sound alike. (9)
10. Flora's got beastly cheek. (7)
15. A bit of butter on your shortbread? There'd be more than enough to go round. (6)
16. 'E was cruel un'appy over 'is tea. (6)
20 *rev.* Loses the last bit of custom. (2)

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

■	■	Y	O	U	R	S	E	L	V	E	S	■
S	■	F	■	■	I	■	■	■	X	■	■	■
T	H	I	N	G	■	N	O	T	R	U	M	P
O	■	R	■	R	■	G	■	R	■	L	■	O
N	■	A	X	I	S	■	C	O	L	T	■	S
E	■	C	■	P	■	B	■	T	■	■	■	S
B	E	S	T	■	B	U	L	■	B	E	D	E
L	■	■	■	S	■	L	■	B	■	X	■	S
I	■	G	A	G	A	■	P	A	R	T	■	S
N	■	R	■	N	■	O	■	R	■	E	■	I
D	E	I	F	I	E	D	■	D	I	N	G	O
■	■	L	■	■	O	■	■	■	D	■	N	■
■	F	L	E	U	R	D	E	L	I	S	■	■

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By URBANUS

AUSTRALIAN CREDIT AND DOLLAR BONDS—
MR. CROWTHER ON MONEY AND GOLD

RUMOURS from the Far East and the Balkans cast their ugly shadows upon the stock markets this week. Gilt-edged stocks inevitably fell, and in particular the Australian. It is an odd thing that in New York Australian Government dollar loans are quoted at around 53 for the 5 per cent. issues. Does this mean that our American friends regard the chances of Australian survival as poor? By no means. There never was an active American market in these Australian dollar bonds even in peacetime, and in war, when no British investor is allowed to buy dollar stocks in New York, the market in them has ceased to exist. They might just as well be quoted at 35 as 53. Occasionally these 5 per cent. bonds, maturing in the 'fifties or 'sixties, can be purchased in London from old holders, and the price asked for is 105 (London terms) which is equivalent to 85 per cent. at the official exchange rate. To sell an Australian bond yielding about £5 17*s.* 6*d.* per cent. flat and over 7 per cent. at redemption would seem to be bad business for the seller, but the Far East "crisis" has made for nervousness, while the Treasury requisitioning of dated India loans has shaken confidence in Dominion maturities. The Treasury would not, of course, want to requisition these Australian dollar issues, which are now held mainly in London, for dollar purposes, for it could not possibly sell them to Americans in return for dollars. If Americans have never been willing buyers of Australian bonds in peace, what would induce them to buy in war? The only excuse for requisitioning would be if Australian surplus balances in London had accumulated to an unwieldy size, as Indian balances have done, and could not be employed in a more useful way. But in the case of Australia there is a heavy external bill for interest. In the year to June, 1940, the export surplus was insufficient to pay interest on overseas debt, and if the London balances of the Commonwealth Government have risen it is only because of an inflow of capital and because Great Britain is advancing the cost of maintaining Australian forces overseas. So I do not expect to see Australian dollar bonds requisitioned, and if there is any chance of buying them in London I would advise an investor who is not nervous of Japan to seize it.

* * *

There cannot be a more fluent writer on economics than Mr. Geoffrey Crowther. His sentences flow rapidly and rhythmically and his arguments follow each other as briskly as conversation at cocktails. The lucidity of his exposition is quite exhilarating. He was the ideal economist to write the intelligent layman's guide to money. Between the learned treatises in the Keynes' manner, which are so difficult to digest, and the popular potted handbooks which are too childish for words, there have been very few books on money worth reading. Mr. Crowther cleverly fills the gap and I advise every investor to buy his *Outline of Money*.* No new refinements in the theory of money are propounded. There is nothing even original in the book. Mr. Crowther sets out quite simply to explain the "works" of the monetary system. He takes us through the theory and the practice of money, the fluctuatings in its value and the practical possibilities of money control. And he has an interesting chapter on Saving, Investment and the Trade Cycle. Of course, in a reasonably-sized book on such a vast subject it is inevitable that excessive brevity should occasionally detract from its value to monetary thought. For example, in a section on capital and debt, Mr. Crowther stops short in a highly interesting argument which might have led him into startling conclusions. Consider this passage:

> Individuals can save in money, the community of individuals cannot. And since the parts cannot be greater than the whole, it follows that saving-in-money that is not accompanied by saving-in-goods is merely thrown away. Not only is it thrown away, it stores up trouble for the future. For the individuals who have done the saving have their money or their money claims, which are enforceable against the community, even though the rest of the community is penalised by the exercise of them. This is the distinction between capital and debt, between interest and usury. The only way in which the community can enrich itself and the standard of living of its members can be raised is by the accumulation of capital—that is, of useful durable goods—which are paid for by saving.

From this argument Mr. Crowther might well have deduced that the State should abolish debt and interest on debt, and should only allow capital in money to earn a dividend if, as the result of risk-bearing, it creates real wealth. The concluding chapters of Mr. Crowther's book deal with the foreign exchanges, exchange management and control, the gold standard and international balances. His remarks on the future of gold, now that it has become "the pensioner of the dollar," are well worth study by every holder of gold shares. I would hasten to assure them that Mr. Crowther sees for gold, as a medium of international settlement or exchange only, a continued lease of life, but not an indefinite life. The United States, Great Britain (on account of South Africa, Canada and Australia) and Russia are all too interested in gold production to allow gold to disappear yet awhile as an international medium of exchange. After all, it is one of Hitler's aims to abolish the gold standard, so why should we?

* *An Outline of Money*, by Geoffrey Crowther. Nelson, 10*s.*

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NET PROFIT NEARLY £8,000,000

THE 32nd annual ordinary general meeting of F. W. Woolworth and Co., Ltd., was held in London on February 14th, Mr. W. L. Stephenson (chairman) presiding. Reviewing the company's operations the Chairman said the past year had been one of great and increasing difficulty. They had suffered some damage from the enemy and had lost the services of the majority of their experienced men.

Fortunately their selling organisation was very widespread, and where their business had suffered, sometimes to the extent of the complete destruction of a store, requirements of customers have been met by their smaller stores in the locality.

BALANCE SHEET AND ACCOUNTS.

The net profit for the year was £7,958,159. Taxation took £4,310,910 of this; dividend to Preference and Ordinary Stockholders will take £2,975,625; Building Reserve £250,000, Benevolent Fund £110,000—a total of £7,646,535, leaving £311,624 to add to the amount carried forward.

The item "Sundry Creditors" loomed unusually large, but there was an immediate liability of something over £5,000,000 to the Tax Collector, including the amount due for Purchase Tax. The Company's holding in Government securities had increased by £3,182,616.

From 1st April, 1940, Profits in excess of the average for the years 1936/37 are payable in full as Excess Profits Tax. For year 1940 this tax amounted to about £1,450,000, which was included in the provision for taxation. Also included was a further £700,000 for Purchase Tax liability for the period October 21 to December 31, 1940. Should the company be able to continue as successfully this year as last, something like a total of £10,000,000 will be due to the State on the year's operations.

Such an excellent account of their Board's stewardship could not have been brought about without wholehearted co-operation amongst their staff.

The report and accounts were unanimously adopted.